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# Mithuna

The Male-Female Symbol in Indian Art and Thought

Prithvi K. Agrawala

*with a foreword by*

Profes sor T.R.V. Murti



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## FOREWORD

All creation proceeds from the union of a duality, the co-operation of two diverse principles or relation between entities of two different orders or polarity. This truth underlies every sphere of existence, nature, life, civilisation, art and religion. Nothing that is utterly and severely single can produce anything. Even the physical atom consists of a nucleus and its satellites; electricity is bi-polar, positive and negative. In the animate realm, we have the male and the female. In fact, the union of the male and the female (the *Mithuna*) provides the key to the understanding of the religious symbolism behind Brahmana and Māyā, Śiva and Śakti, God and his creative Will, etc.

Dr. Prithvi Kumar Agrawala has, with commendable insight and imagination, dealt with this basic concept in all its ramifications. He shows how this Mithuna symbolism underlies the myths of the Vedas (including the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads), such as the Golden Egg (Hiraṇyagarbha), Heaven and Earth (Dyāvā-Pṛthivī), Yama and Yami, Prajāpati and Vāk, Pati and Patni, and a host of other formulations. As he happily puts it : “Emerging out of its chaotic mystery of primordial abstractions, Mithuna is accepted as the highest concept of human existence, of life’s abundance and exultation, of beauty, auspiciousness and things aspired for. Kindred symbols of inexhaustible beauty and prosperity known in Indian art and tradition are the Kalpadruma (Wish-fulfilling Tree), Kāmadhenu (Wish-fulfilling Cow), Pūrṇaghaṭa (Vase of Plenty), and Uttarakuru (the Elysian Land of all happiness and abundance). The list may be multiplied by adding some other motifs, such as the Wishing Jewel, Wishing Conch, Wishing Horn, etc., of varied descriptions and accepted in the consciousness of the people as talismans of miraculous gifts. But all such idyllic concepts are incomplete in themselves except the Mithuna which stands complete by itself owing to its very definition.”

Dr. Agrawala traces the later developments of this concept in the Purāṇas and the Tantra and the Bhakti schools. The Tantras were interested in working

out a synthesis between Bhoga (Enjoyment, Pleasure) and Final Release (Mokṣa), by manipulating and sublimating the sex-impulses. His interpretations of these attempts are quite illuminating, although one may not agree with them in entirety. Dr. Agrawala states it excellently well: "That which may be understood by us now on the sheer human level as erotic phantasy was shown on the temple walls as bringing out the basic truth of all religiosity—the divine connubium comprehended in sexual mundanity—for such was the aim of their authors. ... Even in the Bhakti mysticism, at the back of certain devotion-al formulations an idea of Mithuna dualism had come to be basically understood. Under the later cult of Bhakti, mystic devotion, the motif of the union or reunion of the individual soul with God was given a metaphorical elaboration in the imagery of the love of the herd-girls (Gopīs) for Kṛṣṇa. Every individual is a woman who aspires for the ultimate union with her lord, the Puruṣa. Thus in certain medieval Viṣṇuite sects even the male devotees dressed themselves and behaved like women with reference to their husband-lord Kṛṣṇa. Indeed, the 'union' was treated symbolically to be the sexual union both in literary descriptions and pictorial renderings. The best illustration of the theme on the mystical level is represented by the Rāsa-maṇḍala where Kṛṣṇa, the Universal Puruṣa, is encircled by a great dance-ring comprising those innumerable beings—the simulated females—who have attained His exalted 'company' through their intense devotion and absolute submission to Him."

The author is no doubt mainly interested in showing the Mithuna motif as illustrated in literature and art, especially painting and sculpture. The philosophical and religious implications are, however, adequately drawn and explained. By a rare combination of sound scholarship, analytic exposition and objectivity of treatment, Dr. Agrawala has, in my opinion, made a signal contribution to the subject. It is eminently readable and is based throughout on original sources. I have no manner of doubt that his work on the *Mithuna* will be accepted as a standard book on the symbolism of religious art.

T.R.V. Murti

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## PREFACE

The present work is a new study of the *Mithuna* symbol in its history and meaning through the ages. *Mithuna* is the Man-and-Woman motif that occurs and recurs under many contexts and representational assumptions in various phases of Indian culture, art and thought. The subject is studied by us here from an approach which is quite different from the one that has been adopted in the earlier writings on Indian erotic art. Most of the scholars have so far devoted much of their attention to a study particularly of the Maithuna (sexual act) aspect of the Male-Female theme which, however, forms part of Chapter Seven of the present work also. We have in a wider perspective taken Mithuna as a symbol pervading different areas of Indian art and thought and analysed fully its implications in manifold contexts from such fresh aspects as One and the Many, Male and Female, Mithuna as an Idyllic Concept, Incomplete Mithuna, Eternal Mithuna and Sahaja, etc. An exposition of the Mithuna theme as brought out in the following pages in its definition purely as a motif reveals it as forming the key to analysing several basic ideals permeating different Indian metaphysical systems and mythical formulations as well as their tangible projection in art and iconography at successive stages of history. The book is divided into eight chapters.

Chapter One, entitled 'One And The Many,' introduces the subject against its primordial setting in Vedic and Upaniṣadic philosophy on the basis of which the rudimentary beginnings of Mithuna as a symbol in early metaphysical thought are analysed. Literally, Mithuna means a productive pair. The symbol took shape, presumably, as one of the primary notions achieved by man in his primordial understanding of the 'dualism of female-male sexes and their union as the source of new life. The dualism of opposites conceived in Nature behind all creation—a fundamental imagery of man's early understanding—was derived from the essential Male-female pattern of productive life. In the light of certain Vedic texts, early imageries of cosmogony are seen to have

their foundation in the sex dualism which logically descended to the level of myths of divine entities as male and female. The creative impulse called *Kāma*, Will or Desire, is mentioned as the essential substratum for the One Ultimate principle, which is divided into principles of creative duality. The same Desire is conceived to work as the all-uniting force inducing creative fusion of the multiple opposites in the recurrent process of cosmicisation. The mythical definitions of archetypal male and female were attempted by Vedic thinkers in several possible terms of mutual relationship, such as the Father-Daughter, Male-Female Twins, Brother-Sister, Mother-Son, all of which, on human level, become Incest. Acceptable in the social pattern of human life it is only the Mithuna of Man-Woman as Husband-Wife, who are Father-Mother of the progeny.

Chapter Two, entitled 'Male and Female,' investigates further into the occurrence of archetypal sex motifs in early Indian beliefs and art, namely Nudity, Robe, Phallus, Vulviform, Great Mother-Goddess, Bisexual Entity, Sexual Union, its homology as Sacrifice (Yajña), Ānanda or immortal Bliss and its human share in sexual union, and Marriage as a gift of *Kāma*.

Chapter Three, entitled 'Mithuna, An Idyllic Concept,' brings to focus, for the first time, a folk-religious definition of the Male-female theme as an idyllic concept, pure and simple, standing for the blissful existence and abundance of human life. In this respect it appears to have evolved like several other kindred symbols of inexhaustible plenty and beauty, such as the Wishing Tree, Wishing Cow, Wishing Vessel, Wishing Jewel, etc. There is also a popular Indian belief of *Uttarakuru* found echoed in early Historic art and post-Vedic literary tradition. Uttarakuru is the Elysian land of Indian imagination believed to be ever inhabited by Mithuna or male-female pairs enjoying life of unending pleasures and joys. Likewise, the Mithuna pairs existing in ever happy life formed the main motif of all idealistic theories of primeval ages maintained by the Jaina, Buddhist and Brahmanical creeds. That the mythical accounts of the pleasure land of Uttarakuru were not mere poetic fancies is demonstrated by many portrayals pertaining to it in early Indian sculpture. Particularly interesting are the Kalpadruma, Tree-of-life or Wishfulfilling Tree giving birth to Mithuna pairs as its fruits, the Wishing Tree and Creeper bringing forth as its blossoms many bounteous gifts of choice ornaments, fabrics and drinks. Several plausible abbreviations of the Uttarakuru and its Mithuna theme are to be identified in later art tradition, such as the couple enjoying music, dance or drink, the lotus creeper bringing forth female or male figures or gifts of ornaments and garments.

Chapter Four, entitled 'Mithuna and Dampati,' deals with the next definition of the male-female theme as *Dampati*, i.e., married couples as husband-and-wife, that formed the pivot of all Indian socio-religious thinking. The Indian tradition believed in two diametrically opposed ideals of human life having equal religious merit, one that of positive social order belonging to the

Householder, the other of the Ascetic going against worldly dictates of Nature. But *both* have a common goal of Emancipation (*Mokṣa*, *Nirvāṇa*) signifying total freedom from worldly bondage. The eminent Indian theory of *Puruṣārtha*, Human Goals, has set three aims of fulfilling one's worldly life in terms of *Dharma*, socio-religious duty, *Artha*, material resources, and *Kāma*, all instincts inherent in man by nature. The Fourth and Final aim is *Mokṣa*. The first Three Pursuits are of worldly life and the Fourth aims beyond it. The Dampati or Householder pursues the Triple Aims in their harmony and according to an Indian scheme of Four Stages of life, *Āśramas*. But the Ascetic may skip over the first three stages and enter the fourth stage of *Samnyāsa* to strive for the Final Aim of Salvation in his own way.

The Householder's life is praised from the very beginning of Indian literature as the root-centre of society and its welfare. The psycho-moral evolution of human life is viewed as essentially based on it. The part played by the *Puruṣārtha* ideal in shaping individual householder's life, according to the social order, is briefly analysed by us. It has been also indicated as to how the concept of Mithuna or Dampati called for a social set-up even in the Indian pantheon of gods and goddesses, who appear classed in regular Dampati or consort pairs in Indian art and mythology about the beginning of the Christian era though the process at work may be traced back to the Vedic period. The portrayal of Dampati couples in art can be distinguished from other Mithuna depictions on the basis of any of the following factors, namely (1) the Indian ritual injunction on the position of wife at the left side of husband, (2) the figure of happy couples present with no erotic involvement, (3) such couples in adoration attending on the deity or his symbol, (4) elaborate affairs of loving couples shown according to a set scheme of amorous pastime of garden sports, water sports, embellishment of the body, drink, music and dance, etc.

Chapter Five, entitled 'Mithuna, A Motif,' surveys the occurrence particularly in art of the male-and-female motif as a beatific symbol of human society and weal. Its representations in Harappan art, primitive painting and on a protohistoric Deccani pot are identified for the first time in their true relevance. In the Vedic tradition, one basic maxim of liturgical exegesis widely resorted to by the Brāhmaṇa commentaries is indicated to be founded in the fertility significance of Mithuna or pair. That the motif of Mithuna was used as a branded mark on the ears of cattle is known from a Vedic passage. Continued tradition of the symbol can be well traced from its occurrence in the Punch-marked coin devices (c. 800 BC—200 BC) and subsequently in early Indian monuments which have an unbroken history since the third cent. BC. An analytical study made of diverse occurrences of the Mithuna symbol in early Indian sculpture and minor arts shows how it came to be cherished by the Indian artist as a motif of common fascination and auspicious bearing. The textual injunctions cited from architectural treatises and other literature of the



Gupta and post-Gupta periods fully support its contemporary portrayal in temple sculpture. A significant note has been made of Mithuna pairs of demigods such as the Gandharvas, Vidyādhara, and hybrid beings such as the Centaur and Serpent, and also of birds and animals which are found represented frequently on the religious edifices.

Chapter Six, entitled 'The Incomplete Mithuna,' introduces an altogether new explanation of the portrayal of voluptuous female figures on religious monuments. We call it the *incomplete* Mithuna as it represents only a half or fragment of the male-female theme. The amorous instinct in man is mainly female-focussed and thus the female element finds symbolically an illustrious multiform to accord the male's languid desires in sexual sphere. In the Indian tradition this incomplete or complementary aspect of Mithuna is found to have its representation in the multiple figures of Alluring Femininity appearing in Her libidinous self-display. They occur on Stūpa railing-pillars of the Buddhists and the Jainas alike, from the second cent. BC. Of such alluring females more than two dozen bodily postures are enlisted as signifying their various psychic situations in erotic anticipation. Later on they came to occupy the walls, pillars and architectural portions of the temples in which positions they are described by classical Sanskrit poets as well as medieval treatises on architecture.

According to the Tantric imagery and the temple planning corresponding to a Tantric diagram or Yantra, these females were considered as aspects of active energies subservient to the Great Śakti.

A persisting belief in celestial beauties is traceable on the literary side to the Upaniṣadic texts and the Buddhist and Jaina canons. Their presence in full erotic attraction on the exterior of religious monument appears to have been widely accepted by all Indian religions and it, however, involved no false apology for any deemed heretical outlook. The enticing Apsaras figures, as they are popularly called, stationed on the temple walls were perhaps there to play rather a didactic role demonstrating the gradation in the realm of unsatiated desires.

A unique exemplification of the incomplete Mithuna is witnessed in the Rāgamālā series of Rajput and Mughal paintings during the fifteenth through nineteenth cent. For the first time a key to understand truly the puzzling and variable iconographies of the Rāgamālā pictures is offered here. An exceptionally subtle representation of the ethos of Nāyikā or Love-woman will be found in the Rāgamālā (i.e., "Garland of Musical Modes") painting which, in their very pictorial concept, are of a unique kind in the whole range of world art. They are in fact to present 'hieroglyphs' of the Indian musical melodies, called Rāgas and Rāginis, i.e., Male and Female melodies, respectively. Pictorial renderings of the mood of each of the six male Rāgas are shown to bring out the motif of Mithuna in union, and likewise that of the thirty-six or more female Rāginis, as representing the motif of Mithuna

in aspiration or anticipation. Most of the Rāgini pictures, as analysed by the author, are thus based on the concept of incomplete Mithuna, showing a lonely maiden or heroine languishing, in her various moods and gestures, for the union with lover, and the material world and nature being treated as reflecting the particular mood of the heroine as well as the melody personified by her.

Chapter Seven, entitled 'Mithuna As Maithuna,' underlines an essential and dynamic expansion of the Mithuna symbol as *Maithuna* or sexual union. The author has divided the study of this implied aspect of the otherwise simple male-female theme in three distinguishable contexts, (1) the art of love-making proper, (2) sexual act as a ritualistic and religious symbol, and (3) its portrayal on religious buildings. As for the first section, Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra* is the earliest Indian treatise on erotics available to-day dating in its extant textual form to the second-third cent. AD. But it owes, as it is now well-known, much of its contents to many preceding exponents and authors on the subject. Something about the first human teacher Śvetaketu on erotics, mentioned by Vātsyāyana and credited in the great Indian Epic to be the founder of social order of marriage, is traceable back to the Upaniṣadic texts. In the Upaniṣad passages cited, the central idea is that the conjugal union is transformed into a hierogamy being a ceremony comprising preliminary purifications and prayers. From a considerable antiquity, it appears, the secrets of the Erotic Knowledge had found expression also in art for their illustrative merit revealing to the worthy the coital techniques and *āsanas*, and also serving the virtuoso in love for pleasure. Such ancient illustrative material is, however, lost but its former existence is indicated by the literary evidence referring to the palace apartments or bed-chambers equipped with amorous painting and sculpture.

The other aspect discussed is of sexual union or Maithuna in its ritual symbolism or paradigm as a means of spiritual uplift or soteriological discipline, accepted in Yoga and Tantra. The origin of this approach to sexual pursuits is traced back to a Rgvedic hymn describing such ascetic ecstasies. Their sexo-yogic path can be presumed to have subsequently given birth to the Tantra creed. The sexo-yogic ideals and pursuits of the great Indian Tantric way of life are discussed in contrast to the aims and regulations of the social order.

Third section of this chapter is devoted to a discussion of the erotic portrayal in religious architecture. The author is of the view that there can be no single explanation forwarded for its ubiquitous presence on temple walls as the Mithuna motif has a long history and overwhelming place in the religious thinking and architecture of the Indian people. Moreover, any opinion of a defending or condemning nature given from a standpoint of modern conventional propriety can hardly do justice to this motif. There can be no place more sanctified in purpose than a shrine of the god for a people who build it. We are, therefore, not to consider the temple figures as merely erotic portrayals in isolation from their contextual totality of existence. The author

holds that from a historical point of view, the simple man-and-woman Mithuna came to be particularly expanded with the change of the religious attitude in the medieval period (c. AD 700 and after) with respect to its otherwise implicit aspect of Maithuna or sexual act and thus the age-old symbol found a new lease of life for it. Primarily, we are to trace the background of this change of attitude at a stage of Indian religious history that largely explains the frank and significant portrayals in religious art. More than one strand of tradition and manifold symbolical bearing are seen to have contributed their share to the most dynamic formulation of this theme. For example, the Hindu temple invoking a full-fledged commentary on the collective social idealism of Triple Objective including sexual desires; the religious belief in sympathetic magic effected by amatory act and its portrayals; the architectonic planning of the temple in accordance with a Tantric Yantra; the fertility significance of coital ritual in the temple cultus and its surrogate as temple reliefs; the sexo-yogic ideals of Tantra symbology; the Vedānta allegory of divine connubium to be apprehended in sexual mundanity; the path of love-worship in Bhakti mysticism; etc.

Chapter Eight, entitled 'The Eternal Mithuna and Sahaja,' makes in a way the cycle of Mithuna study complete. Here the author summarises particular views of Indian religious philosophies that conceived the Mithuna symbol and its varied implications as apprehending the nature of Ultimate Truth. As early as the Upaniṣadic thought, the bliss experienced in sexual union is called the paradigm of highest Bliss which is an attribute of Brahman, the Ultimate Self. The same trend of thought is shown to be widely dwelt upon in the Buddhist and Vedānta schools, Kashmir Śaivism, Kṛṣṇaite Bhakti mysticism, and particularly in Tantric discipline and philosophies. In many of the above doctrines the concept of ultimate joy or soteriological bliss is found epitomised by the term *Ānanda*, or *Sahaja-ānanda*, or later on simply *Sahaja*, which, it is proclaimed, arises in spontaneity from the absolute merger or unity of all phenomenal dualism. It is to the same dialectic of the Biunity of the principles of polarity that the entire cosmos is referred in Yoga mysticism and Tantra.

The accented expression of Mithuna or the male-and-female theme in Indian art and ritual has ever been a thing of wide interest both to scholars and general readers. The present venture studies this greatly fascinating subject in a new and comprehensive setting. It treats the Indian male-female symbol in the widest possible range of its existence from prehistoric ages to pre-modern times and of its multiple presence in religious, social and philosophical ideologies and art of India.

Banaras Hindu University  
25 May 1983

Prithvi K. Agrawala

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- Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi* : 9, 14, 17-20, 27-28, 34-36, 49, 51, 60-61, 71-72, 74, 81-84, 86, 93-94, 111, 146-47, 149-50, 156, 168, 171, 173, 175-77, 227-28 :
- American Institute of Indian Studies, Varanasi* : Ills. 1, 2, 6, 15, 25-26, 32, 42-43, 48, 56, 59, 70, 75, 77-80, 85, 95, 105-08, 112, 114, 116-22, 124, 133-36, 138, 140-44, 153-55, 160, 162, 167, 169-70, 172, 174, 200-01, 206-08, 220, 234;
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- Line-sketches of Ills. 23, 41, 67, 88, 104, 239-40 by Kunwar D. P. Singh, Banaras Hindu University; of Ills. 87, 90-91 by Mr. Jai Shanker Mishra, Banaras Hindu University; Ill. 12, after P. Graziosi, *Palaeolithic Art*, London, 1960; Ill. 33, after V. S. Agrawala, *Studies in Indian Art*, Varanasi, 1965; Ill. 109, after J. Burgess, *The Buddhist Stūpas of Amaravati and Jaggayyapeta*, London, 1887; Ill. 110, after J. Fergusson and J. Burgess, *The Cave Temples of India*, New Delhi, 1969 Ill. 161, after J. Fergusson, *Tree and Serpent Worship*, London, 1873; Ill. 89, after E. J. Mackay, *Chanhu-daro Excavations*, New Haven, Connecticut, 1943.

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## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. A pair of kissing faces. Red sandstone. Pillar detail from Svarga Brahma Temple at Alampur, Mahbubnagar district, Andhra Pradesh. Inscribed 688-89 AD.
2. Man-woman Mithuna. Sandstone, 37×20 cm. From Orissa. 13th cent. AD. Patna Museum.
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8. "In the beginning this creation was as large as a woman and a man closely embraced." Terracotta. North India. 5th cent. AD.
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  14. Mother-goddess. Unshapely female form defined by superimposed spheroidal masses for the thighs, breasts, and a featureless head, and barely sketched short arms and stump-legs. Bronze, ht 7 cm. From Iron Age Megalithic burials at Adichchanallur, Tinneveli district, Tamilnadu. c. 5th cent. BC.
  15. He of the Golden Phallus. Liṅga, ithyphallus, is the abstraction of the male principle. This is the earliest known Śaivite Liṅga, at Gudimalam, Chittor district, Andhra Pradesh, under worship inside the temple. Its realistic phallic form has in addition a full-fledged icon of standing Śiva carved on the shaft. Granite, 152.5 cm. 1st cent. BC.
  16. Devi as Śrī-Lakṣmī, the Goddess of Beauty and Abundance. A pair of Space-elephants pour libation on her head from water-jars held in their trunk. She imparts amnesty with her right hand displaying 'fear-not' or *abhaya* pose. Moulded terracotta. From Kosam, Allahabad district, U.P. 2nd cent. AD. Allahabad University Museum.
  17. Devi. This is a magnificent image of the Goddess standing in graceful stance of triple bend wearing various ornaments in a perfect harmony with the bodily amplitude besides a sacred thread and a high conical crown. Her right hand is held in the attitude of carrying a lotus while the left hangs at ease. Bronze, ht 61 cm. South India. c. 900 AD. National Museum, New Delhi.

18. Devī as Sarasvatī, Goddess of Eloquence and Wisdom. Standing in the stance of threefold bodily flexion, she bears in her four hands a lotus, a manuscript, a rosary and a water-vessel. A maid companion holding *Vīṇā* stands on either side. At the bottom figures a devotee Dampati revering the Goddess. Marble, ht 120 cm. From Pallu, Bikaner, Rajasthan, 11-12th cent. AD.
19. Androgynous effigy. Terracotta, ht 14 cm. From Mohenjo-daro, Indus Valley. Late 3rd millennium BC. National Museum, New Delhi.
20. Ardhanārīśvara or Half-man Half-woman form of the Great God Śiva. The juxtaposed male and female emblems figured into a perfect body-composition are seen as the right and the left halves of the God standing leaning on the bull Nandin “Joyful”. Besides other details, the God’s ithyphallus appears “rested” on the lotus-formed Yoni of the Goddess. Portion of wall-relief in rock-cut subterranean Śiva Temple at Elephanta, Bombay. c. 750 AD.
21. Uniting couple. Carving detail on a stone wheel of Sun Temple at Konark. 13th cent. AD.
22. Haṃsa Mithunas poised on lotus sprays of the Vase-of-Plenty. Sandstone Roundel on pillar of railing from Bharhut Stūpa. 2nd cent. BC. Indian Museum, Calcutta.
23. Front : Śrī-Lakṣmī, Goddess of Beauty and Abundance in the milk-bestowing posture. Back : Haṃsa Mithunas poised on lotus sprays rising from the Vase-of-Plenty. Sandstone pillar, ht 116 cm. From Mathura, 1st cent. AD. National Museum, New Delhi.
24. Kāmadhenu, Wishfulfilling Cow, who is represented as the Cosmic Cow Mother. Gouache on paper. Kashmir, 19th cent. AD. Private collection.
25. Seated Yugalika pair under a Kalpa tree. Sandstone, 18×13 cm. Mathura, 10th cent. AD. Mathura Museum, no. 1111.
26. Yugalika pair seated under a Kalpa tree. Stone panel from Khajuraho, c. 10th cent. AD.
27. Emperor Māndhātā in his victorious camp of Uttarakuru. This Elysian clime is symbolically rendered by its Kalpa trees, the one on left shows human couples taking their birth from its branches. The cross-section below gives vivid scenes of Mithuna enjoyments, including music and dancing. Rock-cut relief in Vihāra Cave XX at Bhaja, Poona district, Maharashtra, c. 200 BC.
28. In Uttarakuru, Mithunas take their birth from the branches of Kalpa tree. Detail of Bhaja relief in Ill. 27.
29. Pleasures of Mithuna life in Uttarakuru. Sandstone. Panel on front face of east pillar of North Gate, Great Stūpa, Sanchi, Raisen district, Madhya Pradesh. 1st cent. BC.
30. Detail of Ill. 29.
31. Detail of Ill. 29.



32. Mithuna life in the Elysian land of Uttarakuru. Panel on front face of north pillar of Western Gate, Great Stūpa, Sanchi. 1st cent. BC.
33. A couple engaged in music amidst gifts from Wishing trees and creepers. West face of western pillar of South Gate, Great Stūpa, Sanchi. 1st cent. BC.
34. Portion from coping of railing. From Bharhut Stūpa. 2nd cent. BC. Indian Museum, Calcutta.
35. Couple enjoying music and dance in arboreal retreat. Terracotta plaque, 7.8×9.9 cm. From Mathura, 1st cent. BC. National Museum, New Delhi, no. 49.275.
36. Amorous pair on a couch. Terracotta plaque, ht 10.5 cm. From Kosam, 2nd cent. BC.
37. Amorous Mithuna. The female carries a lute while the male its shell-plectron. Panel on pillar of sandstone railing from Bodhgaya, Bihar, 1st cent. BC.
38. Amorous couple. Panel on pillar of Bodhgaya railing, 1st cent. BC.
39. Mithuna standing under an Aśoka tree. The embarrassed male wooes his bashful mistress by offering her a drink. Buff sandstone, ht 51 cm, with traces of paint. Patna city. 1st cent. BC. Patna Museum, no. Arch. 8178.
40. (i) Mithuna standing under an Aśoka tree. The annoyed female turned to the side is being appeased by the male who touches his ears in apology.  
(ii) Standing female, part of another amorous group. From Patna city. Allied to Ill. 39.
41. Mithunas as carriers of the Great Garland. Marble. Fragmentary beam from the outer railing of Stūpa at Amaravati, Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh, Middle of 2nd cent. AD. Original in the British Museum.
42. Couple. Sandstone, 37×23 cm. From Central India. 5th cent. AD. Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, no. 318.
43. Standing Mithuna under a tree. Sandstone. Detail of pillar-bracket in portico entrance to Cave III at Badami. 6th cent. AD.
44. Auspicious Mithuna under a tree. Panel on berm, south façade, of Sun Temple at Konark. 13th cent. AD.
45. Nāri-latā, Wishing Creeper producing maidens. Sandstone doorjamb at Gadhwā, Allahabad district. Early 5th cent. AD. For continued tradition of this motif till the 18th cent., see Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, pl. 22, fig. 3.
46. Detail of Ill. 45.
47. Amorous Mithuna. Sandstone fragmentary rail-upright. From Mathura. c. 2nd cent. BC. Private possession.
48. *Above*, Seated male and female. *Below*, Copulation. The scenes are identified to represent the legend of Rśyaśṛṅga. Note the stag's horn on the head of the young hermit, as also in Ill. 221. Bottom panels of a red sandstone rail-upright. Mathura. 2nd cent. AD. Mathura Museum, no. 151.

49. Royal couple. Granite. Panel on south façade of Arjuna Ratha at Mahabalipuram, Chingleput district, Tamilnadu. 630-660 AD.
50. Śiva and Pārvatī. Moulded terracotta, 44×28×7 cm. From Mahadeo Ghurahu, Basti district, U.P. c. 500 AD. Lucknow Museum, no. 71.28.
51. The Apsarases, celestial danseuses, in music and dance. Detail from a railing upright of Bharhut Stūpa. 2nd cent. BC. Indian Museum, Calcutta.
52. Music and dance in the harem. Detail of sandstone lintel showing Dwarf incarnation of Viṣṇu (also Ill. 163). From Pawaya, Gwalior. 5th cent. AD. Gwalior Museum.
53. Śiva and Pārvatī. Sandstone slab from Kosam. Inscribed 458-59 AD. Indian Museum, Calcutta.
54. Ardhanārīśvara. Granite. Image in south wall niche of portico of Karyavarohana Temple. Nagapattinam, Tanjore district, Tamilnadu. 11th cent. AD.
55. Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī. Panel on south wall of Parshvanath Temple at Khajuraho. 11th cent. AD.
56. Boar Incarnation caressing Goddess Earth. Granite. Detail from wall relief in Varaha Mandapa at Mahabalipuram. 7th cent. AD.
57. Impassive god Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu resting in his Yoga Sleep on the World Serpent "Remainder" (Śeṣa) or "Endless" (Ananta). Detail from wall relief of Vishnu Temple at Devagarh, Jhansi district, U.P. 5th cent. AD.
58. Active Goddess Lakṣmī shampooing the feet of reclining lord Viṣṇu. Detail from the same relief as in Ill. 57.
59. Creator god Brahmā seated in part embrace with his consort Sarasvatī. Sandstone, ht 55.9 cm. Mathura. c. 1000 AD. Mathura Museum, no. D 22.
60. Gaṇapati seated with his pair. Stone relief from Nageshvarasvami Temple at Kumbhakonam, Tanjore district. c. 10th cent. AD.
61. Kubera with his consort Hārītī. Sandstone relief, ht 26.6 cm. Mathura, 2nd cent. AD. Patna Museum, no. Arch. 5830.
62. Standing couple. Male plays on a lute while female is dancing. Cast bronze. From Kosam. 2nd cent. BC.
63. Viṣṇu accompanied with his two consorts, Bhūdevī, Earth-goddess and Śrīdevī, Beauty-goddess. Sapphire intaglio. South India. c. 14th cent. AD. Private collection.
64. Devotee couple at a sacred tree. Relief on a corner pillar in eastern entrance of railing of Stūpa II at Sanchi. 2nd cent. BC.
65. Standing donor couple. Trap. Relief on façade of rock-cut Caitya-hall at Karla, Poona district. 1st cent. BC.
66. Donor couple in dancing posture. Trap. Relief on façade of rock-cut Caitya-hall at Karla. 1st cent. BC.
67. Devotee couples adoring a Stūpa. Marble. Panel from Amaravati, early 2nd cent. AD. Original in the British Museum.

68. A devotee couple paying homage to Jina Pārśvanātha. Relief on the sandstone pillar, installed in 460 AD. during the reign of Gupta emperor Skandagupta, at Kahaon, Deoriya district, U.P.
69. A devotee couple paying homage to Buddha. Pedestal detail of a standing Buddha (ht 193 cm), installed in 477 AD. during the reign of emperor Budhagupta at Sarnath. Sarnath Museum, no. 341.
70. Two attendant divinity couples of Avalokiteśvara. They are Tārā, Bhṛkuṭi, Sudhanakumāra and Hayagriva. Basalt. From Nalanda, Nalanda district, Bihar. c. 11-12th cent. AD. Nalanda Museum, no. 7.
71. Amorous couple. Gold repousse on a lac filling, ht 6.7 cm. From Patna city. 1st cent. BC—1st cent. AD. Formerly in the Jalan Collection, Patna.
72. Amorous couple. Terracotta plaque, 12.7 × 8.9 cm. From Ahichchhatra. 1st cent. BC. National Museum, New Delhi.
73. Mithuna pairs. Terracotta. c. 100 AD. (i) From Ahichchhatra. 12.9×8.1 cm. Lucknow Museum, no. 56.492. (ii) From northern India. Lucknow Museum, no. 51.82.
74. A couple engaged in music and dancing. Stone. From Kosam. 1st cent. AD. Allahabad University Museum.
75. Amorous couple. Grey soapstone, ht 60 cm. From Bodhgaya. 2nd cent. AD. Patna Museum, no. Arch. 1524.
76. Amorous Mithuna in balcony. Upper panel of a railing upright. Mathura. 2nd cent. AD. Mathura Museum, no. 151. See Ill. 157.
- 77-78. Scenes from amorous pastimes of a young loving couple, identified as showing palace life of Buddha's brother Nanda with his wife Sundari. Red sandstone fragmentary doorjamb carved on two faces, 140×26 cm. Mathura. 2nd cent. AD. Lucknow Museum, no. J 533.
79. Mithuna figures alternating with panels showing Buddhist legends. Portion of Stūpa railing. From Nagarjunakonda. 3rd cent. AD. National Museum, New Delhi, no. 50.18.
80. Mithuna figures alternating with panels showing Buddhist legends. As in Ill. 79.
81. Amorous couple. Detail from Stūpa railing. Nagarjunakonda. 3rd cent. AD.
82. Amorous couple. Detail from Stūpa railing. Nagarjunakonda. 3rd cent. AD.
83. A loving couple. Sandstone panel. From Mandasor, Madhya Pradesh. c. 500 AD. Gwalior Museum.
84. Loving couples on pillar. Sandstone. Durga Temple at Aihole, Bijapur district, Karnataka. 6th cent. AD.
85. Loving Mithunas in roundels on pillar. From portico of Durga Temple at Aihole. 6th cent. AD.
86. Nudes. Terracotta. From Bengal. c. 800 AD. Asutosh Museum, Calcutta.
87. Mithuna as motif of human generation. Man and Woman are protected

- by the charm of a pair of horns against formidable rhinoceros. Steatite seal. From Mohenjo-daro. Late 3rd millennium BC.
88. Man and Woman and other symbols. Clay sealing. From Kalibangan, Bikaner district, Rajasthan. Harappan, late 3rd millennium BC.
  89. Male and female flanking a tree. Seal-impression in pottery, 1.79 cm square. From Chanhudaro. Harappan, late 3rd millennium BC. After E. J. Mackay.
  90. Man and Woman. (i) Imalikhoh Cave and (ii) Monteroza Cave, of Pachmadhi rock-shelters, Madhya Pradesh. Primitive cave paintings in white on sandstone rock. Copies by J. S. Mishra.
  91. Cohabiting couple. Painting inside a pottery bowl from Daimabad, Ahmadnagar district, Maharashtra. Prehistoric.
  92. Man-Woman Mithuna and other symbols. Silver punch-marked coin. Northern India. c. 800 BC.—200 BC. Private collection.
  93. Scenes of cultic rituals dedicated to the Nude Goddess. Fragmentary ring-stone, 5.7 cm. From Rupar, Ambala district, Haryana. 600 BC.—200 BC. The annular disc (see a complete specimen in Ill. 222) having a sunk opening through its centre carved with figures of the Nude Goddess symbolised “Yoni,” the Great Matrix, with the potency of the entire creation hidden within it.
  94. A couple performing dance and drink rituals dedicated to the Nude Goddess. Steatite plaque. From Rajgir, Patna district. 4th-3rd cent. BC.
  95. Nude Mithuna. Buff stone plaque, 3.6×3.4 cm. From Kosam. 3rd cent. BC. Allahabad Museum.
  96. Goddess Lakṣmī with human and animal couples. East face of a corner pillar in southern entrance of railing of Stūpa II at Sanchi. 2nd cent. BC.
  97. Man and Woman. Detail of Ill. 96.
  98. Sacred Tree and human and crane Mithunas. North face of a corner pillar in western entrance of railing of Stūpa II at Sanchi. 2nd cent. BC.
  99. Wheel-topped pillar and a devotee couple. North face of a corner pillar in northern entrance of railing of Stūpa II at Sanchi. 2nd cent. BC.
  100. Sacred pillar and human and bull Mithunas. East face of a corner pillar in western entrance of railing of Stūpa II at Sanchi. 2nd cent. BC.
  101. Auspicious Mithuna. Roundel on railing pillar from Bharhut Stūpa. 2nd cent. BC. Indian Museum, Calcutta.
  102. Man and woman riding on a pair of addorsed goats. Panel on rear face of lowest beam of East Gate of Stūpa at Sanchi. 1st cent. BC.
  103. Elephant-riding couples. Carved in the round on capitals of rock-cut pillars in Caitya-hall at Karla. 1st cent. BC.
  104. Frieze showing amorous Mithunas. Trap. Upper portion of façade of Caitya-hall at Kondane, Poona district. 1st cent. AD.
  105. Friezes showing amorous Mithunas. Trap. Upper portion of rock-cut façade of Vishvakarma Cave (no. 10) at Ellora, Aurangabad district,

- Maharashtra. 7th cent. AD.
106. Part of uppermost frieze detail of Ill. 105.
  107. Standing Mithuna. Trap. Fragmentary pilaster, 95×28 cm. From Pitalkhora, Aurangabad district. 1st cent. BC. Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.
  108. Symbolical pillar flanked by series of Mithunas on either side. Marble. Upright from Tekkalpadu, Guntur district. 3rd cent. AD. Victoria Jubilee Museum, Vijayavada.
  109. Symbolical pillar flanked by series of Mithunas on either side. Railing upright, width 33 cm, from Amaravati Stūpa. 2nd cent. AD. After James Burgess.
  110. Mithuna figures in superimposed panels on doorjambs. Rock-cut Cave III at Nasik. 2nd cent. AD.
  111. Temple doorframe showing bands of superimposed panels with Mithuna figures. Red sandstone. Pārvati Temple at Nachna Kuthara, Panna district, Madhya Pradesh. 5th cent. AD.
  112. Mithuna figures. Sandstone. Part of rock-cut doorframe of Cave 19 at Udaigiri, Vidisha district, Madhya Pradesh. Early 5th cent. AD.
  113. A Mithuna group. Part of doorframe carving of Vishnu Temple at Devagarh. 5th cent. AD.
  114. Amorous Mithunas. Creamish sandstone. Fragmentary doorjamb from Khilchipur, Mandasor. c. 500 AD.
  115. Above : Painting showing Seven Mortal Buddhas and Maitreya. Below : Eight seated amorous couples. Lintel of portico doorway of Cave 17 at Ajanta. Late 5th cent. AD.
  116. Pilaster decoration showing seated Nāga couple with attendants. Left wall of verandah in Caitya-hall 26 at Ajanta. Late 5th cent. AD.
  117. A flying couple. Pillar bracket in hall of Cave 16 at Ajanta, c. 475 AD.
  118. Amorous couples on doorway. Extreme right of verandah in Caitya-hall 26 at Ajanta. 5th cent. AD.
  119. Amorous couples and standing damsel with a parrot. Pilaster detail in vestibule of Cave 27 at Ajanta. 5th cent. AD.
  120. Amorous couples and other figures. Façade of Cave I at Ajanta. Early 7th cent. AD.
  121. Flying Gandharva Mithuna in an attitude of love. Relief on ceiling in portico of Cave II at Badami. Late 6th cent. AD.
  122. Flying couples. Relief on ceiling in portico of Cave II at Badami. Late 6th cent. AD.
  123. Amorous couples on pillars of the cloister. Durga Temple at Aihole. Late 6th cent. AD.
  124. A flying Mithuna, interpreted by O.C. Gangoly as representing the third sign of the zodiac. Ceiling relief in portico of Cave I at Badami. Late 6th cent. AD.

125. Man-and-woman as Mithuna Rāṣi, the third sign of the zodiac, with the Sun. Sandstone. Detail from round abacus of a Lion-capital from Udaigiri, Vidisha. 5th cent. AD. Gwalior Museum.
126. Amorous Mithuna. Fragmentary slab, ht c. 44 cm, from basement of Vishnu Temple at Devagarh. 5th cent. AD.
127. Two Mithuna groups. Fragmentary slab, ht c. 68 cm, from basement of Vishnu Temple at Devagarh. 5th cent. AD.
128. Mithuna scenes on temple superstructure. Sandstone. Gupta Temple at Madhia, Katni, Madhya Pradesh. 5th cent. AD.
- 129-132. Four Mithuna groups from temple superstructure. Moulded terracotta panels. Vishnu Temple at Bhitargaon, Kanpur district, U.P. 5th cent. AD.
133. Amorous Mithunas and other figures. Soapstone. Detail of entablature over southern wall of Kalleshvara Temple at Bagali, Bellary district, Karnataka. Late 10th cent. AD.
134. Amorous couple. Sandstone. Detail of engraved medallion on pillar in main hall of Mallikarjuna Temple at Nadkalasi, Shimoga district, Karnataka, 11th cent. AD.
135. Amorous couples, maidens and ithyphallic dwarfs. Sandstone. Detail from plinth of Mahakuteshvara Temple at Mahakut, Bijapur district. Early 7th cent. AD.
136. A flying Gandharva couple and a standing Mithuna. Buff sandstone. Doorframe fragment, 82×132 cm. From Sondani, Mandasor. c. 500 AD. National Museum, New Delhi, no. 51.94.
137. Kinnara or centaur Mithuna. Human male is riding the horse-bodied centauress. Roundel on pillar in north-east sector of railing of Stūpa II at Sanchi. 2nd cent. BC.
138. A human lover with a horse-faced centauress. Soapstone. Panel on wall of Keshava Temple at Belur, Hasan district, Karnataka. Dated 1117 AD.
139. A Mithuna of semi-human beings. Carving detail from stone encasing of Dhamekh Stūpa at Sarnath. 5th cent. AD.
140. Jala-mānuṣa Mithuna in an amorous attitude. Panel on ceiling of hall of rock-cut Ravalphadi Cave at Aihole. c. 600 AD.
141. Jala-mānuṣa Mithuna in an amorous attitude. Detail from pillar in Chikkigudi Temple at Aihole. Late 7th cent. AD.
142. Antelope pair. Granite. Part of rock-cut Gaṅgā relief at Mahabalipuram. c. 650 AD.
143. Monkey family. The male takes out lice from the female's head who suckles the young one. Part of rock-cut Gaṅgā relief at Mahabalipuram. c. 650 AD.
144. Seated Nāga couple. Wall panel in Caitya-hall 19 at Ajanta. 5th cent. AD.
145. Mina-mithuna or Pair of Fishes. It is one of the Eight Auspicious Symbols. Red sandstone of Mathura. Detail of decoration on a stone parasol, found, at Sarnath. 1st cent. AD. Sarnath Museum.

146. *Sālabhañjikā*. A Yakṣi or dryad standing on a *makara* or sea-monster. Railing upright from Bharhut Stūpa. Inscribed : *Sudasanā yakhini*. 2nd cent. BC. Indian Museum, Calcutta.
147. *Sālabhañjikā*. A Yakṣi or dryad in embrace of a tree stands over an elephant. Railing upright from Bharhut Stūpa. Inscribed : *Culakokā devatā*, 2nd cent. BC. Indian Museum, Calcutta.
148. *Sālabhañjikā*. Woman standing on lotus in part embrace of a tree. West face of corner pillar in northern entrance of railing of Stūpa II at Sanchi. 2nd cent. BC.
149. *Sālabhañjikā*. A Yakṣi or dryad in part embrace of a tree. (She stands on a fish-tailed horse.) Railing upright from Bharhut Stūpa. Inscribed : *Cadā yakhi*. 2nd cent. BC. Indian Museum, Calcutta.
150. *Sālabhañjikā*. A Yakṣi or dryad. From gateway carving of Great Stūpa at Sanchi. 1st cent. BC. Indian Museum, Calcutta.
151. *Sālabhañjikā* or tree-nymph. North end bracket of East Gate of Great Stūpa at Sanchi. 1st cent. BC.
152. *Sālabhañjikā* damsels on railing uprights flanking seated Buddha figures. Detail of a lintel, 127×57 cm. From Mathura. 2nd cent. AD. Lucknow Museum, no. B 208.
153. Stūpa with Nāga-slab attended by maidens. Limestone slab, 147×97 cm. From Chandavaram, Nellore district, Andhra. 3rd cent. AD. Government Archaeological Museum, Hyderabad.
154. Maiden wringing her hair after bath, the falling water-drops being swallowed up by a swan. Above : a couple in balcony. Railing upright, 60×17 cm. From Mathura. 2nd cent. AD. Mathura Museum, no. 1509.
155. Indolent maiden in dance ecstasy. A parrot perched on her thigh nibbles at the girdle. A nude couchant dwarf under her feet. Railing upright, ht 76 cm. From Mathura. 2nd cent. AD. Lucknow Museum, no. B 92.
156. Maiden with a wine cup standing under an Aśoka tree. Railing upright fragment. From Mathura. 2nd cent. AD. Lucknow Museum.
157. Maiden carrying a wine vessel. Railing upright. From Mathura. For its upper panel see Ill. 76. 2nd cent. AD.
158. Sportive maidens on four uprights of railing. Mathura. 2nd cent. AD.  
(i) Maiden brandishing a sword. (ii) Maiden kicks the Aśoka tree with her left foot. This motif is described by classical poets as *Aśoka-dohada*, "Pregnancy of the Aśoka tree." (iii) Standing lady fondles a child with a rattle. (iv) Woman bathing in the nude under a water-fall.
159. Idle maiden standing to right with folded hands. Railing upright, ht 38.1 cm. From Mathura. 2nd cent. AD. Mathura Museum, no. F 27.
160. *Sālabhañjikā* sport. Maiden engaged in the pastime of culling flowers. Railing upright, 57×19 cm. From Mathura. 2nd cent. AD. Mathura Museum, no. J 57.
161. A sword-dancer. On lintels of the arched gateway are carved various

- motifs including amorous couples. Fragmentary relief from Amaravati Stūpa. 2nd cent. AD. Original in the British Museum. Line sketch after J. Fergusson.
162. Eight Maidens of Space in an endless whirling motion encircle the Wheel-of-Law. Sandstone votive tablet. Jaina. From Mathura. 1st cent. AD. Lucknow Museum, no. J 248.
  163. Women displaying various bewitching gestures. Scenes of palace balconies of demon-king Bali. Detail from lintel showing Dwarf Incarnation of Viṣṇu (also Ill. 52). From Pawaya, Gwalior. 5th cent. AD. Gwalior Museum.
  164. Female bust. Creamish sandstone, ht 54 cm. From Gwalior. c. 700 AD. National Museum, New Delhi.
  165. Celestial Beauty. Pillar bracket in façade of Cave 17 at Ellora. c. 6th cent. AD.
  166. Vṛkṣakā or tree-nymph. Sandstone, ht 45.7 cm. From Gyaraspur, Vidisa district. c. 1000 AD. Gwalior Museum, no. 25/1.
  167. Female torso. Buff sandstone, ht 31.5 cm. From Kiradu, Barmer district, Rajasthan. 9th cent. AD. Jodhpur Museum, no. 21/1422(8).
  168. Nude female torso. From Sun Temple at Konark. 13th cent. AD. Konark Museum.
  169. Female bust. Buff sandstone, ht 26 cm. From Kiradu. 12th cent. AD. Jodhpur Museum, no. 90/2322(3).
  170. Voluptuous damsel and a teasing monkey. Part of gateway arch of Mukteshvara Temple at Bhubaneswar. Late 10th cent. AD.
  171. Śālabhañjikā maiden. Relief on wall of Rajarani Temple at Bhubaneswar. 11th cent. AD.
  172. Maiden painting her foot. Amorous couples and other figures stationed on the temple wall. Quartzite. Ambikā Temple at Jagat, Udaipur district, Rajasthan. Dated, 961 AD.
  173. Celestial maidens stationed on the Temple wall. South wall of Dance Pavilion of Sun Temple at Konark. 13th cent. AD.
  174. Celestial danseuse with a parrot. Bracket on east wall of inner pavilion of Keshava Temple at Belur. Dated 1117 AD.
  175. Śālabhañjikā woman with a parrot standing under a tree grasping its foliage. A dwarf under her feet. Wooden bracket. Rudravana Mahavihara at Patan, Kathmandu, Nepal. 18th cent. AD.
  176. Śālabhañjikā woman stands trampling over a loving Mithuna. Wooden bracket. Indreshvara Temple at Panauti, Nepal. 18th cent. AD.
  177. Sixteen Maidens of Space occupying brackets of cupola. They may also be counted as Thirtytwo by adding sixteen dancing females appearing below major figures. Marble ceiling of Jaina Temple built by Tejapāla. Mount Abu, Rajasthan. Dated 1232 AD.



178. Seated heroine with a mirror. Orange colour stone. From Jodhpur district, Rajasthan. c. 1800 AD. Private collection.
179. Lady after bath. Gouache on paper. Jaipur, Rajasthani School. c. 1800 AD. Gwalior Museum.
180. Lady with a wine cup. Gouache on paper. Gwalior, Maratha style. 19th cent. AD. Gwalior Museum.
181. Abhisārikā Nāyikā, Heroine on her way to the tryst. Gouache on paper. Guler-Kangra, Panjab Hills, Pahari School. 1780-1800 AD. Gwalior Museum.
182. Utkā Nāyikā, Heroine awaiting the lover who approaches. Gouache on paper. Bundi-Kotah, Rajasthani School. 18th cent. AD. Lucknow Museum.
183. Rāginī Todī, represented by a maiden playing on Viṇā in the forest with deer. Gouache on paper. Mewar, Rajasthani School. c. 1650 AD. National Museum, no. 50.354/15.
184. Rāginī Āsāvārī, represented by a Śābara maiden charming serpents in the forest. Gouache on paper, 24.2×16.2 cm. Bikaner, Rajasthani School. Late 17th cent. AD. National Museum, no. 48.14/65.
185. Rāginī Bhairavi, represented by a woman worshipping Śiva Liṅga. Gouache on paper. Mewar, Rajasthani School. c. 1650 AD. National Museum, no. 50.354/29.
186. Rāginī Sāraṅga, represented by a maiden with deer in the garden. Gouache on paper. Provincial Mughal School, Bengal. 18th cent. AD.
187. Rāginī Kāmoda, represented by a lonely maiden in the forest. Gouache on paper. Alwar, Rajasthani School. c. 1775 AD.
188. Rāginī Rāmakalī, represented by a woman seated in the chamber. Gouache on paper. Mixed Rajput-Mughal style. c. 1650 AD.
189. Rāginī Tailaṅgi, represented by a maiden with a torch on the bank of a rivulet. Gouache on paper. Mixed Rajput-Mughal style. c. 1650 AD. Ills. 188 and 189 belong to a Rāgamālā set of twenty of which the backscript says that the pictures were painted according to the tradition of *rāgamālā hindavi*.
190. Rāginī Baṅgāla, represented by a maiden as an ascetic. Gouache on paper, 19×27 cm. Rajasthani School. c. 1700 AD.
191. Rāginī Gauṛī or Gauṛ-Malhār, represented by a maiden seated as an ascetic in a pavilion on an island in the stormy night. The first element Gauṛ in the name signifies Bengal; Malhār is the melody of rainy season. Gouache on paper, 12.7×22.2 cm. Kotah, Rajasthani School. c. 1775 AD. National Museum, no. 56.36/3.
192. Rāga Hiṇḍola, represented by a couple on a swing. Gouache on paper, 23.8×18.3 cm. Bijapur, Deccani School. c. 1570 AD. National Museum.
193. Rāga Dipaka, represented by a prince on elephant moving in a procession of the Lamp-festival with female musicians and maids. Gouache on

- paper, 11.5×17.5 cm. Bundi, Rajasthani School. c. 1775 AD. National Museum, no. 51.64/55.
194. Rāga Śrī, represented by a couple listening to a concert. Gouache on paper. Mewar, Rajasthani School. c. 1650 AD. National Museum.
  195. Rāga Mālavakauśika, represented by a lord attended by a maid and enjoying music. Gouache on paper. Mewar, Rajasthani School. c. 1650 AD. National Museum.
  196. Rāgini Kedāra, represented by an ascetic with a disciple. Gouache on paper, 16.5×21.6 cm. Mewar, Rajasthani School. c. 1650 AD. National Museum, no. 50.354/19.
  197. A Son of Rāga Pañcama, represented by a youth with black bucks. Gouache on paper. Kulu style, Pahari School. 18th cent. AD. Inscribed in Takri : *pañcamarāga kāro (?) putra*.
  198. Amorous couple. Gouache on paper. Rajasthani School. c. 1800 AD. Gwalior Museum.
  199. Lovers in embrace. Gouache on paper. Jaipur, Rajasthani School. c. 1825 AD. Gwalior Museum.
  200. Love-god Kāmadeva shooting with a bow, accompanied by two attendant-consorts Rati and Trṣṇā, dancing with their hands locked above head. Rounded stele, ht 81.5 cm. From Gaya. 10th cent. AD. Patna Museum, no. Arch. 6046.
  201. Kāmadeva, the World-conquering Hero carrying his sugarcane bow and flower-arrows, and consort Rati with a parrot. Detail of engraved medalion on pillar in main hall of Mallikarjuna Temple at Nadkalasi. 11th cent. AD.
  202. A uniting couple. Gouache on paper. Kangra, Panjab Hills, Pahari School. c. 1800 AD.
  203. Six pages from a Nepalese album showing demonstrational poses in intercourse. Gouache on paper. c. 1900 AD. Lucknow Museum.
  - 204-05. Maithuna Āsanās. Two pages from an Orissan manuscript illustrating demonstrational poses in intercourse, with obvious legendary background. Drawing on paper covered by yellow orpiment. Folk tradition. 19th cent. AD.
  206. Amorous couples. Relief of pillar in main hall of Mallikarjuna Temple at Pattadkal, Bijapur district. Middle of 8th cent. AD.
  207. Uniting couples. Soapstone. Panel on plinth of Tripurantakeshvara Temple at Belgami, Shimoga district, Karnataka. 1070 AD.
  208. Uniting Mithuna. Sandstone, ht 70 cm. From Gurgi, Rewa district, Madhya Pradesh. 10th cent. AD.
  209. Emaciated ithyphallic ascetic in dance ecstasy with a drinking cup. Sandstone. From Varanasi city. c. 800 AD.
  210. Naked woman standing over Liṅga, representing the act of initiation into Tantric inner circle. Panel on wall of Sun Temple at Konark. 13th cent. AD.

211. Convention. The Great Guru presides over an assembly of Tantric conventuals. Frieze on plinth of Lakshmana Temple at Khajuraho. *c.* 1000 AD.
212. Detail of Ill. 211.
213. Yogi with Yogini. Note the *liṅga*-symbol set in the circular ear-plaque of the male figure who probably wears a mask. Panel on berm of Sun Temple at Konark. 13th cent. AD.
214. Ritual intercourse supervised by the Guru who bestows 'ambrosial drink' on the disciple. Relief on plinth of Vishvanatha Temple at Khajuraho. 10th cent. AD.
215. Maithuna orgies and the preparation of virility-increasing nutriment. Frieze on plinth of Lakshmana Temple at Khajuraho. *c.* 1000 AD.
216. Scenes of Maithuna rite. Left : A female being united by a stallion. Frieze on socle of sanctum of Lakshmana Temple at Khajuraho. *c.* 1000 AD.
217. A female Tantric being united by a boar. Engraving on a discrete stone paved into the terrace of Lakshmana Temple at Khajuraho. *c.* 900 AD.
218. Union with a mare. Relief on plinth of Lakshmana Temple at Khajuraho. *c.* 1000 AD.
219. Ritual Maithuna. Relief on plinth of Lakshmana Temple at Khajuraho. *c.* 1000 AD.
220. Devadāsi, Harlot-of-god, carrying flywhisk. Cast bronze, ht 21.5 cm. From Akota, Baroda district, Gujarat. *c.* 800 AD. Baroda Museum.
221. Young hermit R̥ṣyaśṛṅga. Note the stag's horn above the forehead suggesting his iconography. Railing upright fragment, ht 80 cm. From Mathura. 1st cent. AD. Mathura Museum, no. J 7.
222. Annular stone as Yoni. Three identical figures of the Great Nude Goddess carved on the sunk ground round the centre-hole are so rendered that Her Yoni coincides with the hole. Her attributive symbol filling the symmetrical composition of carving is the lotus creeper. Such Mother-goddess "ring-stones" obtained in good numbers throughout northern India and dating from 400 BC-100 BC represent the prototype of later Śrī-Cakra (see Ill. 237). Diam. 5 cm. From Kosam. 3rd cent. BC. Private collection.
223. In the shrine of Goddess Lakṣmī. Standing Goddess in the centre and couples performing Maithuna ritual on either side. Terracotta plaque, diam. 11 cm. From Awra, Madhya Pradesh. 1st cent. BC.-1st cent. AD. State Museum, Bhopal.
224. Monkey couples. Carving detail from a stone wheel of Sun Temple at Konark. 13th cent. AD.
225. Scenes of erotic play juxtaposed with figures of divinities. Carved stone wheel of Sun Temple at Konark. 13th cent. AD. Inspired by a sublime vision the architect designed this temple as the stone-built colossal model

- of the Sun's mythical chariot, drawn on twelve wheels by seven horses, and most ingeniously sited on the sea-shore as it were visualising the imagery of the Solar Car emerged out of the ocean whirling along the Sun's heaven-bound journey.
226. Yogi as Bhogī. Panel on berm of Sun Temple at Konark, 13th cent. AD.
  227. Rāsa-maṇḍala or Dance-circle of Cowherd-girls as multiple individual souls with Kṛṣṇa the Eternal Male. Gouache on paper, 67×51 cm. Jaipur Rajasthani School. Late 18th cent. AD.
  228. Kṛṣṇa steals the clothes of cowherdresses bathing in the river. From Vishnupur, Orissa. 11-12th cent. AD. Bhubaneshwar Museum.
  229. Portrait of Haridāsa Svāmi singing devotional hymns with the vision of divine Kṛṣṇa Lilā. This great ecstatic was the founder of a sect of Love-devotion, Mādhurya-bhakti, and also music guru of Tansen, the foremost musician of Akbar's court, 1542-1605 AD. Gouache on paper. Nathdwara, Rajasthani School. Early 17th cent. AD.
  230. Ardhanārī Naṭarāja. Śiva in his Half-man Half-woman aspect performs the cosmic dance. Bronze, ht 33 cm. South India. c. 12th cent. AD.
  231. Goddess Kālī on Śiva-as-corpse. This symbol image stands for the creative cycle, generation and annihilation. Black stone. Under worship in Shava-Shivā Kālī Temple at Varanasi. 19th cent. AD.
  232. Great Goddess on Sadā-Śiva. The four legs of the couch are borne by the gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Īśvara and Rudra. Cf. *Devī-bhāgavata*, XIII, 12.11-12. Gouache on paper, 34.5×25.5 cm. Provincial Mughal School. Bengal. Middle of 17th cent. AD. (with retouching in the reclining Sadā-Śiva figure).
  233. Three-faced ithyphallic God with Śakti kneeling on his right thigh. With her right hand she raises a cup to the deity. Painted wooden panel, 27.3×18 cm. From Dandan Uiliq, Khotan. c. 650 AD. British Museum, London. After A. Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, pl. LXII (D. X. 8).
  234. Yuganaddha. Heruka and Vajravārāhī united as One in Yab-yum or Father-Mother posture. Bronze, ht 23.5 cm. Nepalese. Inscribed 1544 AD. Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, no. 28 (Ar).
  235. Citipati or Male and Female skeletons united as One dancing in the cemetery. Tibetan painting, Ladakh. c. 1700 AD. After *The Way of the Buddha*, Publications Division, Delhi, pl. on p. 224.
  236. Yantra of the Goddess with indwelling divinities. Gouache on paper. Almora, Kumaon Hills. c. 18th cent. AD.
  237. Śrī Yantra carved in relief on Śiva Liṅga. Under worship in a subsidiary shrine of Annapurna Temple, Varanasi city. 18th cent. AD.
  238. Tantric diagrams of the Subtle Body. Gouache on cloth. Nepalese. 18th cent. AD. Private collection.

239. Vajra on the Lotus. Drawing on paper. Tibetan.
240. *Om maṇi padme hum* : Om. Jewel in the Lotus. Hum. Mystic formula engraved on Tibetan Maṇi- or Jewel-stone.
241. Mystic Syllable Om with indwelling Kṛṣṇa. Banaras brocade. 19th cent. AD.

## Chapter One

# ONE AND THE MANY

**B**y the most intricate technique of procreation Nature perpetuates herself. She has designed for that purpose an intrinsic dualism; poles apart, but attracted at once towards each other by an all-uniting force that is the essential substratum of their original separation. One is changeless, unmoved and immune to any creative indulgence. A single point or Bindu cannot create a form. The One is split into Two for creation. But the Two could also enter into no creation or procreation till they remain apart on their own and do not fill the void of each other. For generative manifestation of life, the erstwhile single duality must stand, then, conjugated essentially in the form of a MITHUNA. Mithuna is the eternal concept of procreative duality. At the same time the symbol of Mithuna invokes the One impartite principle that is divided *ab extra* into contrasted powers of productive male and female (*Ills. 1, 2, 8, 21, etc.*).

Why not should One make creation? It may, if It could. But at once a duplicate becomes co-existent with It if at all One succeeds in creating. So an inevitable Mithuna, at the back of this multiple cosmicisation, is conceived by the ancient as well as the modern. Says the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, “Two means a pair (*mithuna*) : hence a productive pair is thereby obtained; and thus is produced that form whereby he becomes many, whereby he is reproduced.”<sup>1</sup>

For a biological pattern of life it is thus designed by Nature that one becomes transformed into two by way of autofission. Out of a single egg-shell two halves are created. A single seed sprouts into a pair of shoots. For movement or cosmic rhythm one single foot has to take another. It is not One but the Second which begins the chain of multiplicity. The Two give birth to a Third, a Fourth, a Fifth, and further on. Essence of all such cosmic observations was epitomised by Indian thinkers in the very word “Mithuna,” which we have adopted here as our symbol of investigation into the mystery of

<sup>1</sup>*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, II. 4.4.10.

cosmic procreation according to the Indian point of view. Mithuna is the perfect Indian symbol of Essential Two.

Mithuna means literally a dyad, a pair, or a duplex. There is, though, an explicit dichotomy in the concept of Mithuna. An idea of conjunction, even rather oneness always, inheres in it. It is no duality subject to computation. In fact, a duplication governed by no mathematical possibility, it is of One coming out of One, becoming Two, of One into One to be Two, or, of One branching forth into Two by itself.

The Vedic poets speak of a golden germ or egg, Hiranya-garbha, Hiranya-anḍa, as the first and supreme principle of creation. The rôle of this Golden Germ or Egg (Ills. 3, 4) is always mentioned in the doctrine of Vedic cosmogony, whether in the *Rgveda*, *Atharvaveda*, *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, *Manusmṛti*, or the *Purāṇas*.<sup>1</sup> It is stated that the Lord or Father of creation came out from inside the Egg splitting it into two halves, which formed the heaven and the earth.<sup>2</sup> In particular, the primary rôle of this occurrence is assigned to Cosmic Desire, Kāma, or Love. Thus, we have in the *Rgveda* said :

“Darkness at first was covered up by darkness;  
This universe was indistinct and fluid,  
The empty space that by the void was hidden,  
That One was by force of heat engendered.  
Desire then at the first arose within it,  
Desire, which was the earliest seed of spirits.”<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, the Greek philosopher Aristophanes (c. 415 BC) in his *Birds* knew of a cosmogony of primordial creation which is as follows : At the beginning were Void and Night and Erebus and Tartarus. But Earth was not, nor Air, nor Heaven. In the abysmal womb of Erebus, before all things, Night produced a clear egg, whence in due time, sprang Eros the longed for, pinion of shining gold on his back. ....It was he who, commingling with dark, winged Void, brought forth our race and gave it before all else to the light of day.<sup>4</sup>

One separate hymn in the *Rgveda* is devoted to the mysterious glory of Hiranya-garbha.<sup>5</sup> The cardinal doctrine of the Universal Egg, as developed further, has been exemplified in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* as follows :

<sup>1</sup>See V.S. Agrawala, *Sparks from the Vedic Fire*, Varanasi, 1962, pp. 22f.

<sup>2</sup>*Manusmṛti*, I.12-13; also *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, III.19. 1-2.

<sup>3</sup>*Rgveda*, X.129. 3-4; translation from A.A. Macdonell, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, London, 1900, p. 136.

<sup>4</sup>*Birds*, 693f.; see A.B. Cook, *Zeus, A Study in Ancient Religion*, II, pt. II, Cambridge, London, 1925, pp. 1020ff. In the Phoenician mythology too, a similar common approach to the mystery of first creation prevailed. *Ibid.*, p. 1036.

<sup>5</sup>*Rgveda*, X.121. 1-10.

“Verily in the beginning was water, nothing but a sea of excited water. The water desirous to become progenitors toiled and performed austerity.

As they became heated, a Golden Egg was produced.

There was no system of Time in existence.

The Golden Egg floated on the surface of the sea for a unit of time which became the Year.

And therefrom Puruṣa was born, that is Prajāpati.”<sup>1</sup>

The idea of Hiranya-garbha appears to have sprung from some definite observation by the ancients. The jelly-like semi-transparent substance with no evolution of limbs, but vibrating with the life principle, seems to have been taken by the ancients as the first appearance of life in the matter; that looked golden in its reflection and obviously got the name, the Golden Germ.

The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* enumerated more categorically the process of evolution with respect to different stages in a descending order : There was merely non-being; that became being. The latter changed into an egg which after a span of time by splitting into two became heaven and earth; and, that produced is the Sun or Brahman.<sup>2</sup>

Heaven and Earth are conceived of as the archetypal male and female of the primeval or universal generation (*Ill. 5*). They represent the first couple with distinct biological attributes but easily traceable to a single ultimate source. They are said to be the “foundations” of creation.<sup>3</sup> It was by the inherent self-potency the Golden Egg split into two parts, the one half female and the other half male.<sup>4</sup> The upper egg-shell is the Father, the lower the Mother. But they re-enter into each other to start the chain of procreation and remain recumbent upon each other.<sup>5</sup> It is a basic truth of the first incarnation of life principle, experiencing pangs of separation and getting charged with the opposite or epigamic potencies and again colliding with by that mysterious romance, called the instinct of Love or Kāma of which the first tangible demonstration is the biological act of male-female copulation. Reflecting on this basic truth, indeed, the Vedic thinkers comprehended the principle of first procreative pair of Heaven and Earth in the following erotic image :

<sup>1</sup>*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, XI.1.6. 1-2. Further see *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, VI. 1.1.1 ff.

<sup>2</sup>*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, III. 19.1-4 (summarised).

<sup>3</sup>*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, IV.10; also *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*, III. 8; VIII. 1; *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa*, II. 1. 20.

<sup>4</sup>*Matsya Purāṇa*, III. 31; for other Purāṇic texts, refer V.S. Agrawala, op. cit. (note 1 on page 2 above).

<sup>5</sup>See *Rgveda*, X.27.13; X. 72.3; and I.164.33 as cited below. Accordingly we have the belief recorded in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, III.2.1.29 : “For it is verily the womb turned upwards (*uttānā*) that bears the embryo.”



“Sitting anear and right above He governs us and follows the Earth that lies with her legs uplifted beneath Him.”<sup>1</sup>

“In the earliest age of the gods, Existence sprang from Non-existence. Thereafter were the Regions born. This sprang from Him who has the legs uplifted.”<sup>2</sup>

“The Heaven is my Father, my Begetter; the Navel (-of-immortality) is my kin. This great Earth is my Mother. Between the two recumbent Bowls is the Womb of the Two Parents. The Father deposited the Daughter’s germ within it.”<sup>3</sup>

Thus prior to a Mithuna of man and woman all that is supposed to exist is against or beyond our realisation, is alogical, if not illogical. It represents merely a cosmogonic symbology above biological comprehension.

Both Male and Female are recumbent upon each other in the act of procreation (*Ills.* 5, 6, 9). It is the imagery often indulged in by the Vedic seers.<sup>4</sup> In an eternal existence, they are locked with uplifted legs. Male and Female become Father and Mother representing the twofold pattern essential for progenition.

It is male and female, two opposite genders, who became separated, though in the beginning they were identical or wedded in spirit and mind. “When the conjoint pair parted, the gods exclaimed, ‘let them be wed again’.”<sup>5</sup> “Join together that which had remained united and that which was to be re-united.”<sup>6</sup> Now again they come together (*Ill.* 7). The Mother with the fluid potencies to conceive is fecundated by the Father’s seed. The world pays them adoration.<sup>7</sup>

If the law of Bifurcation or Splitting governs the scheme of creation, in a natural process the two divides from a single entity must represent counterparts exactly corresponding to each other. By an inner force, which is quite unknown and unbalanced, are created separate forms of contrarious nature; the one exact complement of the other. In a cosmic brooding both come together and become again easily and completely socketed momentarily into union, filling as if the gaps of each other for a moment and for ever.

<sup>1</sup>*Rgveda*, X. 27.13.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, X.72.3.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, I.164.33. Further see V.S. Agrawala, *Vision in Long Darkness*, Varanasi, 1963, pp. 119-22.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 121-22. The two arch-parents are described as two inverted bowls facing each other (see notes 1-3 above). The Father Sky and the Mother Earth are thus addressed as ‘two bowls,’ *Rgveda*, I. 160.1; VI. 70.3.

<sup>5</sup>*Rgveda*, X. 24.5. Further see A.K. Coomaraswamy, ‘A note on the *Aśvamedha*,’ *Archiv Orientalani*, VII, 1936, pp. 310-11.

<sup>6</sup>*Atharvaveda*, VIII. 9.7.

<sup>7</sup>Based on *Rgveda*, I.164.8.

Colliding rocks could not help but damage each other. By action and reaction a gap is made, to fill or recreate which a third entity is issued; and that latter combines characteristics of the parental pair.

In a full coalescence or biunion of the male and the female, whether *in principio* or for a while even on human plane, there remains no sense of limitation, no gap or projection, no irregularity or variety, and even no impulse of individuation. That which is the truth of human experience on a momentary basis is also the truth on the universal level of eternal combination.

A twin indeed is the first Mithuna, So is the Yama-Yamī pair in the *Rgveda*.<sup>1</sup> It is a cosmic truth that they are made a kindred pair to consort each other.

Who knows the nature of pristine creation?<sup>2</sup> Yāska, the great Indian exegetist of the sixth century BC, had pertinent doubts : “How can this all be possible?”<sup>3</sup> For it was usual that Vedic seers took recourse in their metaphysical deliberations to a myth of interdependent origin and existence of the primeval phenomena. Otherwise while talking of such cosmic puzzles it was submitted in challenging words : “Who verily knows and who can here declare it, whence it was born and whence comes this creation?”<sup>4</sup>

With reference to their reciprocal birth and coeval existence the primeval pair of creation was thus conceived of in the following words : “From Puruṣa was born Virāj; again Puruṣa from Virāj was born.” “Dakṣa was born of Aditi and Aditi was Dakṣa’s child.”<sup>5</sup>

In a similar imagery the *Atharvaveda* knew of the one Single-deity as brought forth by those principles and phenomena which had all sprung from His-self.<sup>6</sup> Either they had the same origin, or, according to their divine nature, they might have emanated from one another.

Though otherwise an apparent impossibility, this occurrence is a natural phenomenon in the realm of Kāma. They desire each other simultaneously. From Him is born She and He is born of Her. By the power of mind, Male and Female are born in their opposite selves. For a man, a woman is produced. A woman brings forth a man in her mental sphere. Both create each other and spring from each other : this, at once a happening or phenomenon so natural in the primeval age of mind, may later descend to the material level : a truth so holy which otherwise becomes Incest.

They had the following metaphysical speculation on dual origin : Verily, this all was twofold in the beginning : the Existent and the Non-existent. Of these two the Existent was the Sāman, that is mind, that is breath; and the

<sup>1</sup>*Rgveda*, X.10. 1-14.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, I. 164.4.

<sup>3</sup>See J. Müir, *Original Sanskrit Texts*, IV, London, 1863, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup>*Rgveda*, X. 129. 6; see Coomaraswamy, *A New Approach to the Vedas*, London, 1933, pp. 58-9; Agrawala, *The Hymn of Creation*, Varanasi, 1963, pp. 26ff.

<sup>5</sup>*Rgveda*, X. 90.5; X. 72.4.

<sup>6</sup>*Atharvaveda*, XIII. 4. 29-40.

Non-existent, Rk, that is speech, that is exhalation. This Rk desired intercourse with this Sāman. He asked her, "Who art thou?" She answered, "I am She." "Verily, then, I am He." "Let us two here have intercourse." "No", he said, "verily thou art my sister; desire intercourse elsewhere." She said, "Verily, I find no one with whom I might have intercourse; let me have intercourse with thee." "Then cleanse thyself," he said, "verily thou art unclean." And so on.<sup>1</sup>

However, the cosmogonic theories, as developed further in later Vedic thought, induce the agency of a regular creator, called Prajāpati, Lord-of-progeny, or the personal Brahman. Thus we have : "Prajāpati desired, 'May I be more (than one), may I be reproduced.' He meditated silently in his mind; what was in his mind that became the Great (thing). He bethought himself, 'This embryo of me is hidden; through the Voice (Vāk) I will bring it forth.' He released the Voice."<sup>2</sup>

Elsewhere the myth is as follows : Prajāpati alone was this all; Vāk was his second. There took place their Mithuna. She bore the embryo. From him she went away. She gave birth to these generations. Verily she entered Prajāpati again.<sup>3</sup>

This Prajāpati is no other than an anthropomorphic representation of the Desire which is the First Seed of Mind, spoken of in the *Rgveda*.<sup>4</sup> This concept is elaborated particularly in the *Atharvaveda* and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.<sup>5</sup> He himself is the Desire, known as Kāma, first-born and elder to all existence and non-existence. The Fire that is Kāma is the lord of the gods.<sup>6</sup> This very Fire is the progenitor and causer of Mithuna. He is identical with procreation itself.<sup>7</sup>

Thus the myth of Prajāpati-Kāma falling in love with his daughter is evolved. Prajāpati conceived a passion for his own daughter, who is said to be either the Sky or the Dawn or the Speech. 'May I pair with her,' thus thinking he united with her.<sup>8</sup> He was alone in the beginning and second to him came into being his Female Energy, virtually his Daughter. For creation and procreation, the Father had to deposit his seed in the Daughter.<sup>9</sup>

According to this theory as elaborated above, Father-Daughter was the First Mithuna.

<sup>1</sup>Jaiminiya Upanishad Brāhmaṇa, I.53. 1-8 (summarised); see its translation in full by Hans Oertel, *JAOS*, XVI, New Haven, 1894, pp. 130-31.

<sup>2</sup>Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa, VII.6. 1-3.

<sup>3</sup>Kāṭhaka Samhitā, XII.5. 27.1.

<sup>4</sup>See above note 3 on page 2.

<sup>5</sup>*Atharvaveda*, IX. 2. 1-25; XIX.52.1; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, II.2.4.1; VII. 5.2.6; also *Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa*, XVI. 1.1; *Atharvaveda*, III. 21.4 : The deity who is the first (ādyā) in creation is called Kāma.

<sup>6</sup>*Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*, XIX, 2.

<sup>7</sup>*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, V.1.3.10.

<sup>8</sup>*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, I.7.4.1; further see *Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa*, VIII.2.10; *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, III. 33. Also, *Rgveda*, X.61. 5-9 for this myth in origin.

<sup>9</sup>*Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa*, XX.14.2.

But accepted in the social pattern of human life, Mithuna is equal to Man-and-Woman as Husband-and-Wife who become Father-and-Mother of the progeny. It is only as husband and wife they fertilise each other and perpetuate the life from generation to generation. Thus is it explained in the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, "In the beginning this world was Soul (*Ātman*) alone in the form of a person.... Verily, he had no delight. Therefore one alone has no delight. He desired a second. He was, indeed, as large as a woman and a man closely embraced. He caused that self to fall (*pat*) into pieces. Therefrom arose a husband (*pati*) and a wife (*patni*). Therefore this (is true): 'Oneself (*sva*) is like a half-fragment,' as Yājñavalkya used to say. Therefore this space is filled by a wife. He copulated with her. Therefrom human beings were produced."<sup>1</sup> (III. 8)

<sup>1</sup>*Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, I.4.1; I.4.3, translation by Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads*, Oxford, 1931, p. 81.

## Chapter Two

# MALE AND FEMALE

Wild is the passion or Kāma. Kāma is born in the wilderness. And our own mind is that forest, as both the ancient and the modern psychologists proclaim. In that wilderness every thing takes its elemental growth. Or, as an ancient thinker puts it : “Like ocean is this Kāma : there indeed is not the limit of Kāma and not of the ocean.”<sup>1</sup>

The eternal Man, whose uncivilised wild attribute is nudity, is styled as Mahā Nagna,<sup>2</sup> the Great Nude (*Ill. 10*). For him a Nude Woman, Mahā Nagni, is at once present as his counterpart (*Ills. 9, 11*). Any covering or envelopment in their case is yet to be invented. They are dominant Male and Female principles in dalliance for ever. In the complete union their Mithuna may appear male from this side and female from that side; this facet with male emblems and that with female attributes (*Ill. 8*). But none could define exactly the nature of First Mithuna, or could point his finger exactly to whichever form was the male or female. Each hides the other and an absolute Male-Female exists for ever (*Ill. 20*).

That creator for making life possible in a recurrent scheme descends essentially on the plane of limitation—Māyā, Finitising Principle or Phenomenal Illusion. He was the Entity, with no covering, without any external definition; his glory shone with utmost refulgence. He, the Great Nude God, Digambara, whose clothing was Nothingness, had his might and glory infinite and unhindered. For the creation of life he came under the bounds of limitation, had for himself a covering. He covered himself under his own laws of Man and Woman. He hid himself behind the mystery of his own behaviours. He split himself into two shells—opened his nudity and had a covering to conceal it. And it was the Robe that first became wrapped about

<sup>1</sup>*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, II. 2.5.6; also see *Kāṭhaka Samhitā*, IX. 12.

<sup>2</sup>*Atharvaveda* XX.136.11. Cf. *Rgveda*, X. 85.30 : The husband wraps his body in the garment of the wife.

him.<sup>1</sup> For the First Nude next principle available became his consort and that was the covering which shrouded his eternal secret or nudity.

The covering, the skin, the most delicate touch of Kāma, is, thus, the first impulse of creation. The Great Nude Male and the Great Nude Female to hide their nudity get close together, and unite as to serve a covering for each other (*Ill. 8*).

In the primeval wilderness, both the archetypal Nudes wander of their free sweet will. The Nude Goddess chases the Nude God and offering him a dish of food invites :

“Come, come you, O darling, come !  
Let you consume this food and unite with me.”<sup>2</sup>

Or, the case may be otherwise : the man chasing the woman in their elemental need to come together, as illustrated on a bone piece, discovered in the Isturitz cave (France) of Upper Palaeolithic antiquity (*Ill. 12*).

In a cultus of fertility, male and female came to be represented by their distinctive sexual attributes—male by a phallic emblem (*Ill. 15*) and female by a vulviform (*Ill. 13*). The aspect of progenition happens to be more obvious and directly connected with the female sex. Thus a Fertility Female, evolved in the magico-religious background of primitive ritual as the dominant symbol of procreation had already emerged as early as the Palaeolithic age; her plastic representations show her pre-eminent nudity with accentuated attributes of pregnant woman or mother, namely adipose hips and gigantic breasts. Symbolising the Great Motherhood with respect to the process of birth-giving and nourishing, the feminine form was represented from the very beginning as a full exaggerated massive woman figure, sometimes transformed into a sort of “caricature” with enormous and unnaturally shaped physiognomical attributes. Her worship predominated all religions of the ancient world (*Ill. 14*). Indeed as successive developments out of her single pervasive aspect, a host of female divinities emerged.<sup>3</sup>

Her reciprocal is the Puruṣa, the Male, possessor of *membrum virile*. He is the God of Phallus<sup>4</sup> (*Ill. 15*). In early Vedic imagery, he is also known as the one with Hiraṇya-vetasa,<sup>5</sup> the Golden Phallus; on the basis of the same ithy-phallic concept the doctrine of Skambha or Pillar-as-Lord was subsequently

<sup>1</sup>*Atharvaveda*, XVIII. 2.57.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, XX. 135.11 and 13.

<sup>3</sup>Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother*, New York, 1954, ch. IX; E.O. James, *The Cult of the Great Mother*, London, 1959.

<sup>4</sup>‘Śiśnadeva-’, as in *Rgveda*. VII. 25.5 and X. 99.3.

<sup>5</sup>*Rgveda*, IV.58.5; X. 95.4-5; also *Atharvaveda*, X. 7. 41. The meaning of word ‘vetasa’ as phallus is apparent in *Rgveda*, X. 95.4-5 and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. XI. 5.1.1 (see *The Indian Antiquary*, XXXV, 1906, p. 265).

elaborated.<sup>1</sup> A visualised symbol of the union of the Male-and-Female principles was further conceived of as the Liṅga-Yoni icon (*Ill.* 237).

With the appearance of civilisation, there comes the Goddess or Devī, whose form is essentially to be beautiful. A refinement in the iconography on the primitive prototype is achieved and her image now becomes both a symbol of fertility and of enticing beauty. Already Ambikā, Amma, the Great Mother, Aditi, the Great Goddess, Mahī Mātā, the Earth Mother, she came to be represented as Śrī-Lakṣmī (*Ills.* 16, 23, 96), Pārvatī (*Ill.* 17) and Sarasvatī (*Ill.* 18) in subsequent mythology and art.

The earliest male and female deities known from the art of India are met with in the Indus Valley. As is often remarked, the Harappans believed in a Great God deifying in him the dominant male principle. To him worship was offered in the form of aniconic representation of a phallus. Several specimens of a phallic form are discovered at Mohenjo-daro.<sup>2</sup> Apart from the mother-goddess figurines in clay, a number of stone rings found at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa<sup>3</sup> suggest worship of the fertility goddess as Yoni or Vulva side by side the Liṅga of the male deity.

Indeed the greatest of the motifs contributed by the Indus thinkers to the art and religion is the Bisexual being. A being partly man and partly woman, both feminine and masculine simultaneously, is figured in the terracotta art at Mohenjo-daro (*Ill.* 19). In it will be discovered the prototype of the later Ardhanārīśvara. A rather primitive blending of the male and the female attributes is arrived at by the artist showing a figure having typical feminine head-dress and applied breasts, but equipped at the same time with a male organ according to the half-man half-woman imagery.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, it should have been hardly so meaningful at this stage as the Ardhanārīśvara form (*Ills.* 20, 54, 230) of the Great God Śiva is in the subsequent iconography. But in the mythical formulations of the Harappan

<sup>1</sup>*Atharvaveda* X, 8. 1-44 : Hymn of Skambha, the Pillar-deity.

<sup>2</sup>J. Marshall, *Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilization*, London, 1931, I, pp. 58-61; M.S. Vats, *Excavations at Harappa*, Calcutta, 1940, pp. 139-40. A consideration of these finds has led some scholars to arrive at a theory according to which the Harappans are to be identified as the people who are mentioned in the *Rgveda* under the appellation 'śiśnadeva-' (see above note 4 on page 9), i.e., "who have the phallus as their deity." It seems that the Harappans worshipped an ithyphallic god, whom they represented both aniconically and iconically, for we have besides the phallic emblems also an anthropomorphic depiction of the deity with erect penis on the so-called "Paśupati Seal" from Mohenjo-daro. Similar seems to have been the case of the Goddess who was represented, apart from her statuettes, by an annular stone or "ring" being symbolical of the Yoni, the Universal Matrix. See below.

<sup>3</sup>Marshall, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-3; Vats, *op. cit.*, p. 139. An allied specimen of a votive Yoni showing the female organ in a realistic manner was found at Periano Ghundai, Baluchistan (Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 59, pl. XIII, 7).

<sup>4</sup>It may be further remarked that in the Harappan statuary the female figurines similarly show very small breasts. Besides terracotta instances the famous bronze dancer from Mohenjo-daro may be mentioned for this comparison.

too the idea of bisexual being seems to have played a significant part. For, if some ingenious artist authenticated it on the one hand with terracotta models of explicit symbolism, we find on the other, depicted on a stone seal at Mohenjo-daro the great presiding spirit of the Tree-of-Life being of indeterminate sex whom they offered human sacrifice and worshipped as the personification presumably both of fertility and virility.

A very significant statement made by a R̥gvedic seer explains the complex nature of this basic truth as understood so simply by the ancients : “Those who are spoken of as males are truly females and vice versa. It is a truth exposed only to him who has eyes and the blind does not discern this. The one who realised this mystery is a sage and in fact his father’s father.”<sup>1</sup> Those who are overtly females are covertly males. Each man carries within him a woman and each woman a man. Thus the eternal Brahman, it is said, became a female (*stri*).<sup>2</sup> In his absolute elemental aspect he is addressed to be both Man and Woman, Youth and Maiden.<sup>3</sup>

Such observations and philosophical assertions formed basis of the Ardhanārīśvara motif. It is an androgynous being with half-male and half-female attributes.<sup>4</sup> Each individual is a composite of the two opposite aspects of male and female as both father and mother conjugate their selves in the making of it.<sup>5</sup>

According to the Purāṇic lore, the mystery of this great truth was understood in the Ardhanārīśvara form of lord Śiva. Its best representation is achieved, in words of the *Liṅga Purāṇa*,<sup>6</sup> in the composite icon of Śiva and Pārvatī. Śiva is the Liṅga and Pārvatī his consort is the Yoni, and the union of them both creates the ‘Maithunī’ world. That all produced verily from Mithuna is ‘Maithunī’ creation.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, the Liṅga-Yoni nature of the Great God is availed of in all Śaivite shrines as his supreme form despite its erotic features (*Ills. 15, 237*). In it, Śiva’s Liṅga has its foundation in the Yoni of the Great Goddess : an epitome of all cosmological formulations on the ultimate origin of this Maithunī world or bisexual creation.

Indeed the highest appraisal to the fleshly union of man and woman is accorded by the Vedic thinkers. Says the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, “Procreation is this sacrifice.”<sup>8</sup> The sexual basis of mortal creation is glorified as a perfect Yajña which links us moment to moment with the divine immortality. A Tantric origin in the imagery can hardly be overlooked.

<sup>1</sup>*R̥gveda*, I. 164.16.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, VIII. 33.19

<sup>3</sup>*Atharvaveda*, X. 8.27.

<sup>4</sup>see above p. 10.

<sup>5</sup>Further see V. S. Agrawala, *Śiva Mahādeva. The Great God*, Varanasi, 1966, pp. 47-8.

<sup>6</sup>*Liṅga Purāṇa*, I. 99.6 and 9.

<sup>7</sup>see *Śiva Purāṇa*, VII, ch. 15, on the *Maithunī* creation from the Ardhanārīśvara.

<sup>8</sup>*Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, II. 285.



The Man and Woman perform a Wish-fulfilling Sacrifice making oblations of their own selves through sexual intercourse (*Ill. 21*). Human body is the altar; fertilising seed is the molten butter; thereby enters the divine into human beings.<sup>1</sup> Thus says the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: “When Prajāpati had created Woman, he revered her below. Therefore one should revere woman below. He stretched out for himself that stone (i.e., phallus) which projects. With that he impregnated her.”

“Her lap is a sacrificial altar ; her hairs, the sacrificial grass; her skin, the *soma*-press. The two labia of the vulva are the fire in the middle. Verily, indeed, as great as is the world of him who sacrifices with the Strength-libation sacrifice, so great is the world of him who practises sexual union, knowing this.”<sup>2</sup>

By Yajña analogy sexual act is described by another Upaniṣadic seer with reference to the stages in singing the fivefold chant :

“One summons—that is Hiṅkāra.  
He makes request—that is Prastāva.  
Together with the woman he lies down—that is an Udgītha.  
He lies upon the woman—that is Pratihāra.  
He comes to the end—that is a Nidhana.  
He comes to the finish—that is a Nidhana.  
This is the Vāmadevya Sāman as woven upon couplation.”<sup>3</sup>

Or, as we have it elsewhere explained from another angle : “Man, verily, is the sacrificial fire. His speech is the fuel; breath, the smoke; tongue, the flame; eyes, the coals; ears, the sparks. In this fire the gods offer food. From this oblation arises semen.”

“Woman, verily, is the sacrificial fire. Her sexual organ is the fuel; when one invites, the smoke; her vulva, the flame; when one inserts, the coals; the sexual bliss, the sparks. In this fire the gods offer semen. From this oblation arises the embryo.”<sup>4</sup>

A Drop (*drapsa*) from its unknown divine storage descends both upon Father-heaven and Mother-earth, both in his and in her genitals (*yonis*), the Drop which only moves when there they share a single womb (*yoni*), that is, their organs unite in a single sex (*samānā-yoni*).<sup>5</sup> It is the Drop of Madhu or Ānanda released at the time of sexual completion, drop by drop for human

<sup>1</sup>*Atharvaveda*, XI. 8.29; *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*, XVI. 5.

<sup>2</sup>*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, VI. 4.2-3, translation by Hume, p. 168.

<sup>3</sup>*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, II. 13.1, translation by Hume, p. 196.

<sup>4</sup>*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, V. 7.1—V. 8.2.

<sup>5</sup>*Atharvaveda*, XVII. 4.28.

experience. Though separated from the infinite Ocean, each drop is full and an emblem of plenum—a boundless potion of immortality, but for human acceptance. In other words, it is the Wave of Bliss, *Ānanda-lahari*,<sup>1</sup> that descends from the immortal heavens in the form of divine grace upon the man and the woman who make oblations of their selves in the ever-burning fire of *Kāma* or Procreation.<sup>2</sup>

It is an eternal enigma of biological chemistry that a boy is unable to lay seed which he becomes capable of doing as a youth, and again his power of procreation is lost in the old age.<sup>3</sup> Thus in Mithuna, the pair essentially is that of Youth and Maiden.

From this Mithuna of universal nature, Dampati or husband-and-wife relationship emerged with the influence of civilised sacrament of marriage. But the basic principle of *Kāma* is present everywhere. He himself is the instinct of male-female mating and procreativity. Thus the Hindu sacrament of marriage, already evolved fully in Ṛgvedic times,<sup>4</sup> has at the core of all complex ceremonies, a couple of stanzas, brutally frank and straightforward in admitting that “even before the bride-giving ceremony (*Kanyā-pradāna*) by the father and the receiving by the bridegroom (*Pāṇi-grahana*) came into existence, the union of the two sexes did exist as the compelling phenomenon of Nature, namely of the God of Love Himself. Therefore it is said that love gives and love receives, i.e., both the male and the female are actuated by sheer love.”<sup>5</sup>

As it is worded in the ritual formula recited at the Vedic nuptial ceremony :

“Who hath given here to whom ?  
*Kāma* (Desire) hath given to *Kāma* (Desire).  
*Kāma* is the giver, *Kāma* is the receiver.  
*Kāma* hath penetrated the Ocean (-of-existence).  
 Through the mediation of *Kāma* I accept thee.  
 This to thee, O *Kāma* !”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See W. Norman Brown, *The Saundaryalaharī or Flood of Beauty*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1958. The first part of it (stanzas 1-41) is the *Ānandalaharī or Flood of Bliss*.

<sup>2</sup>*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, V. 1.3.10; also see *Gītā*, X. 28.

<sup>3</sup>*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, XI. 4.1.7.

<sup>4</sup>*Rgveda*, X. 85.1-47; *Atharvaveda*, XIV. 1-64 and XIV. 2.1-75.

<sup>5</sup>V.S. Agrawala, *Matsya Purāṇa—A Study*, Varanasi, 1963, p. 49.

<sup>6</sup>*Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa*, I. 8.17.

### Chapter Three

## MITHUNA, AN IDYLLIC CONCEPT

The symbol proceeds from its principal definition to the human actuality. Separated from all its metaphysical and ontological speculations, as stated above and others, Mithuna may now be taken up as a full-fledged symbol of varied implications. As such the outstanding glory of the Mithuna concept is highly sung in Vedic poetry. Let us quote here one edifying Mithuna song from the *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa* :<sup>1</sup>

What is Savitar? What is Sāvitrī?  
Agni is Savitar, Earth is Sāvitrī.  
Where Agni is, there is Earth.  
Or, where Earth is, there is Agni.  
These are two wombs. This is one Mithuna. (1-2)

Varuṇa is Savitar, the Waters are Sāvitrī.  
Where Varuṇa is, there the Waters are.  
Or, where the Waters are, there is Varuṇa.  
These are two wombs. This is one Mithuna. (3-4)

Vāyu is Savitar, Space is Sāvitrī.  
Where Vāyu is, there is Space.  
Or, where Space is, there is Vāyu.  
These are two wombs. This is one Mithuna. (5-6)

The Sacrifice is Savitar, the Metres are Sāvitrī.  
Where the Sacrifice is, there the Metres are.  
Or, where the Metres are, there is the Sacrifice.  
These are two wombs. This is one Mithuna. (7-8)

Thunder is Savitar, Lightning is Sāvitrī.  
Where Thunder is, there is Lightning.

<sup>1</sup>*Jaiminīya Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa*, IV. 27. 1. 17 (= *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa*, I. 32-33).

Or, where Lightning is, there is Thunder.  
 These are two wombs. This is one Mithuna. (9-10)

The Sun is Savitar, the Sky is Sāvitri.  
 Where the Sun is, there is the Sky.  
 Or, where the Sky is, there is the Sun.  
 These are two wombs. This is one Mithuna. (11-12)

The Moon is Savitar, the Asterisms are Sāvitri.  
 Where the Moon is, there the Asterisms are.  
 Or, where the Asterisms are, there is the Moon.  
 These are two wombs. This is one Mithuna. (13-14)

Mind is Savitar, Speech is Sāvitri.  
 Where Mind is, there is Speech.  
 Or, where Speech is, there is Mind.  
 These are two wombs. This is one Mithuna. (15-16)

What is Savitar? What is Sāvitri?  
 Man is Savitar, Woman is Sāvitri.  
 Where Man is, there is Woman.  
 Or, where Woman is, there is Man.  
 These are two wombs. This is one Mithuna. (17)

Such another Mithuna chant will also be found in the same text<sup>1</sup>:

He, the great one, united with Her, the great one.  
 The God united with the Goddess.  
 The Brahman united with the Brāhmaṇi.  
 In that He united, He united.  
 He, the great one, united with Her, the great one.  
 Verily, Agni is He, the great one.  
 This (Earth) is She, the great one.  
 The God united with the Goddess.  
 Verily, Vāyu is the God.  
 The Atmosphere is the Goddess.  
 The Brahman united with the Brāhmaṇi.  
 Verily, the Sun is the Brahman.  
 The Sky is the Brāhmaṇi.

Emerging out of its chaotic mystery of primordial abstractions, Mithuna is accepted as the highest concept of human existence, of life's abundance and exultation, of beauty, auspiciousness and things aspired for. Kindred symbols of inexhaustible beauty and prosperity known in Indian art and tradition are the Kalpadruma,<sup>2</sup> Wishfulfilling Tree (*Ills.* 25, 26); Kāmadhenu,<sup>3</sup> Wishfulfilling

<sup>1</sup>*Jaiminīya Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa*, III. 4.5 and 7-9. Also see *Śāṅkhāyana-Āraṇyaka*, I. 5.

<sup>2</sup>V.S. Agrawala, 'Kalpavṛkṣa, the Wishfulfilling Tree', *JISOA*, XI, 1943, pp. 1-8.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 2-3; V.S. Agrawala, *Vision in Long Darkness*, pp. 95-7. See *Atharvaveda*, IV. 34.8; IX. 5.10; XIII. 1.61; *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, I. 7.6.7; *Rāmāyaṇa*, I. 53.1; *Mahābhārata*, II. 102. 9-10.

Cow (*Ill.* 24); Pūrṇaghaṭa,<sup>1</sup> Vase of Plenty (*Ills.* 22, 23); and Uttarakuru,<sup>2</sup> the Elysian Land of all happiness and abundance (*Ills.* 27-33). The list may be multiplied by adding some other motifs such as the Wishing Jewel, Wishing Horn,<sup>3</sup> etc., of varied descriptions and accepted in the consciousness of the people as talismans of miraculous gifts. But all such idyllic concepts are incomplete in themselves except the Mithuna which stands complete by itself owing to its very definition. A Wishing Tree or Cow is merely a symbol of fulfilment for all those wishes that exist in the Mithuna and are indeed always attendant upon the Mithuna of man and woman. Uttarakuru is the land of imagination where Mithunas exist in unending happiness and are free from worldly needs and longings, as they are instantly fulfilled by plentiful blessings of nature bestowed upon them through the agency of the Wishing Trees, etc. The Mithuna is thus the centre or pivot of all such idyllic beliefs and realities.

The motif of ever happy life is at the back of all idealistic theories of primeval ages elaborated in the Jaina, the Buddhist and Purāṇic literature. The Jainas have used the word 'Yugala' or 'Yugalika' in preference to Mithuna for such blissful Couples who made the first and the most blessed set-up of human society. Prior to the appearance of the first Jina Ṛṣabhanātha, there was the long-drawn-out age of the Yugalikas (Pkt Jugaliās).<sup>4</sup> The Jugaliā pairs (*Ills.* 25, 26) are said to be born as twins of man and woman who united together at free will, but, as yet, had no burden of sharing the responsibility of procreation to carry on from one generation to another. By nature they were simple and auspicious in action. No worldly passions such as selfishness (*rāga*), lustfulness (*kāma*), wrathfulness (*krodha*), greediness (*lobha*), wilful delusion (*moha*) hindered their life of freedom. Endowed with ideal healthy and beautiful condition they lived in perfect happiness with no interruption from disease or death. Each pair dallied with inexhaustible pleasure and got their desires satisfied immediately by the ten kinds of Kalpa trees, providing choicest wines, vessels, musical instruments, lamps, garments, wreaths, ornaments, houses, and so on. In the Jaina texts of later period the description is often likened for brevity to that of the Uttarakuru life and its Kalpadrumas.<sup>5</sup>

It is in the Buddhist<sup>6</sup> and Purāṇic tradition that we have an account of the

<sup>1</sup>P.K. Agrawala, *Pūrṇa Kalaśa or the Vase of Plenty*, Varanasi, 1965.

<sup>2</sup>V.S. Agrawala, *Studies in Indian Art*, Varanasi, 1965, pp. 143 ff., 191-92.

<sup>3</sup>A.K. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, pt. II, Washington, 1931, p. 1, pl. 46; V.S. Agrawala, *Studies in Indian Art*, Varanasi, 1965, pp. 53-54; Moti Chandra, 'Nidhiśṛṅga (Cornucopia),' *Prince of Wales Museum Bulletin*, no. 9, 1964-66, pp. 1 ff.

<sup>4</sup>P.C. Nahar and K.C. Ghosh, *An Epitome of Jainism*, Calcutta, 1917, pp. 647-48; Vijayendra Suri, *Tirthaṅkara Mahāvīra*, I, Bombay, 1960, pp. 7 ff. Also refer note 5 below.

<sup>5</sup>See Jaina Purāṇas, *Ādi Purāṇa*, Ch. III; *Harivamśa Purāṇa*, Ch. VII; *Padma Purāṇa*, Ch. III.

<sup>6</sup>At the earliest, the *Dīgha Nikāya* (Ātānāṭiya 33.4) describes Uttarakuru along with the Sumeru mountain-country inhabited by the Yakṣas and ruled over by their king Vaiśravaṇa. See G.P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*, London, 1960, pp. 355-56.

pleasure-land of mythical Uttarakuru. Along with the Mithuna, the essential feature of the Uttarakuru country is its Kalpa trees. But this does not seem to have its beginning in the priestly religion of the Veda.<sup>1</sup> Apparently the belief in a Kalpa or Wishing Tree was a folk version of the Tree-of-life symbol with its restricted mundane aspect. Thus in an old Jātaka story we come across a detailed description of the Wishfulfilling Tree.

A merchants' party that had set out in search of a treasure came to a wild forest and saw there a mighty banyan tree with cool and pleasant shade. They felled one of its branches that grew on the eastern side and to their happy surprise, from it trickled out pure and clear water; they washed and drank their fill of it. Then one of the branches on the south was hewed which yielded all sorts of things to eat.

"This branch being cut, both rice and meat out in a stream it brings,  
Thick porridge ginger lentil soup and many other things."

Similarly from the western branch:

"Outcame a bevy of fair girls all pranked in brave array,  
And O the robes of many hues, jewels, and rings in plenty!  
Each merchant had a pretty maid, each of the five and twenty."

From the northern branch likewise :

"...outcame a stream of gold,  
Silver in handfuls, precious rings and jewels manifold.  
And robes of fine Banaras cloth and blankets thick and thin,  
The merchants then to roll them up in bundles did begin."<sup>2</sup>

The belief in the wish-granting branches of such a tree was purely idyllic :

"The eastern branch gives water.  
The southern branch gives food and drinks.  
The western branch offers young maidens.  
The northern branch fulfils all desires."<sup>3</sup>

The concept that the Kalpa tree gave all sorts of ornaments of desire is likewise alluded to in the Jaina canon *Ācārāṅgasūtra* :

"Then (the god) decked him with necklaces of many and fewer strings, with one hanging down over his breast and one consisting of one row of pearls,

<sup>1</sup>The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (VIII. 14; VIII. 23) is the only Vedic text which mentions Uttarakuru as the unconquerable country or land of gods beyond the Himalayas.

<sup>2</sup>Mahāvāṇija Jātaka, no. 493, *Jātaka*, text ed. by Fausböll, IV, pp. 250-54; English translation ed. by Cowell, IV, p. 222.

<sup>3</sup>*Jātaka*, text, IV, p. 352.

with a garland, a golden string, a turban, a diadem, wreaths of precious stones, and decorated him with garlands, ribbons, scarves, and sashes like the Kalpavṛkṣa.”<sup>1</sup>

According to the *Rāmāyana*,<sup>2</sup> the mythical country of Uttarakuru is in the northern direction at the end of the earth. This Elysian land of all human enjoyments has Mithunas as its inmates, who lead an exceedingly delightful life under the shade of Wishfulfilling trees. “Flowers of gold as resplendent as fire are seen there in eternal bloom imbued with divine fragrance. The beautiful trees produce garments of various kinds and costly gems which are pleasant for men and women to use in all seasons; beds with beautiful coverlets and pleasing garlands; costly drinks and food of many descriptions; and to crown this all, maidens endowed with beauty, virtue and youth.”<sup>3</sup> A flowery description of this land of idyllic fancy, as given in the Great Epic,<sup>4</sup> further informs that like fruits from the trees the Mithunas of men and women are produced there from the Kalpa trees. (*Ill. 28*). As it is summarised by V.S. Agrawala:<sup>5</sup>

“There, as fruits from trees, are produced: garlands, ornaments and youthful pairs of men and women (*mithunāni*), who draw sustenance from the nectar-like milk of the milky trees and are perfectly matched to each other in beauty, dress and appearance. The human beings in that region are happy and contented like gods being free from all sorrows and ailments, and they do not suffer the pangs of separation.”

In the Purāṇic and classical poetic tradition, this motif of the Mithuna life in Uttarakuru is sometimes treated in further details. It is said that the Mithunas there enjoy a joyous life of thousand years with no ageing and decay in their youth and beauty. They take their origin from the Kalpa trees and do not enter the laws of birth and regeneration.<sup>6</sup> But it is more frequently in these texts that we have a passing reference to the bounteous blessings of Kalpa trees.<sup>7</sup> The Poetic Fancy did not restrict the Kalpa trees to Uttarakuru only. They were discovered also in other mythical lands and paradises such

<sup>1</sup>H. Jacobi, *Jaina Sūtras*, pt. I, Oxford, 1884, pp. 196-7.

<sup>2</sup>Kiṣkindhā, 43. 43-48.

<sup>3</sup>Agrawala, ‘Kalpavṛkṣa,’ op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>Bhīṣmaparva, 7. 2-11.

<sup>5</sup>Kalpavṛkṣa,’ op. cit., pp. 6-7.

<sup>6</sup>*Vāyu Purāṇa*, Ch. 45; see ‘Kalpavṛkṣa,’ op. cit., p. 7. The same belief about the Mithuna birth from the trees and their delightful life is recorded in the other Purāṇas, e.g. *Brahmāṇḍa*, 15. 71-80; *Matsya*, 112. 69-76; *Varāha*, 84.9.

<sup>7</sup>*Divyāvadāna*, Cowell’s edn., p. 203; *Vāyu Purāṇa*, 8.82 ff.; *Saundarananda*, IV. 31; *Śākuntala*, act IV: *Kādambarī*, P.L. Vaidya’s edn., p. 186; *Avantisundarī*, S.K. Pillai’s edn., Trivandrum, 1954, pp. 12, 162, etc.

as the Alakā of Kubera,<sup>1</sup> the Amarāvati of Indra,<sup>2</sup> the Kailāsa of Śiva.<sup>3</sup> Thus says Kālidāsa in his description of Kubera's Alakā : "Where the Kalpa tree alone produces all the choice items of decoration for women, namely clothes of variegated patterns, intoxicating drink that is adept in exciting the coquettish glances of their eyes, blossoming flowers with tender shoots, different varieties of ornaments, and red lac-paint for application to their lotus-like feet."<sup>4</sup>

The Elysian land of Uttarakuru with all sorts of plenty and beauty was not a mere phantasy of the Indian poet. The themes from the life in Uttarakuru find outstanding representations in the sculptures of the early Stūpas and monuments. To Prof. V.S. Agrawala we owe this identification of Uttarakuru life in early art with the motifs of Kalpa trees and Mithunas. According to this authority, the rich literary tradition about Uttarakuru and its Kalpa trees "holds the key to many a scene on gateways and railings of the great Stūpas of Bharhut and Sanchi. For example, we find at Sanchi, carved on the western face of the western pillar of the south gateway, youthful couples engaged in music and pleasure, surrounded by birds and animals and seated under the shade of boughs overladen with costly ornaments of many kinds (Ill. 33). On the entrance to the cave at Bhaja the visit of king Māndhātā to Uttarakuru is illustrated with great elaboration including the garden of the Kalpavṛkṣa-trees and the Mithuna couples enjoying dance and music."<sup>5</sup>

One of the earliest and happiest representations of Uttarakuru and its Mithuna life has been identified in the rock-cut Vihāra at Bhaja. At the eastern end of its verandah, we have a set of two elaborate wall-reliefs of the early second century BC. The one on the right side is of outstanding interest as it depicts the sovran king Māndhātā in his victorious camp of Uttarakuru (Ills. 27-8). The sovereign is riding on an elephant with his protege behind him bearing his standard. The royal group is conceived in colossal proportions as compared to the landscape that is shown under the feet of the elephant. This graphically portrays the victory by Māndhātā over the Uttarakuru country,<sup>6</sup> which has been pictured here with all its mythical tradition of Kalpa trees, Mithunas and joyful life. The stately elephant holds aloft in its trunk an uprooted Kalpa tree from which the figures of damsels appear falling down. There is another tree in the foreground indicating the grove of Kalpadrumas. It is enclosed by a fence and from its branches the Mithuna couples

<sup>1</sup>*Meghadūta*, II. 11; also I. 65; II. 5.

<sup>2</sup>*Saundarananda*, X. 19-27 : Kalpadrumas in the pleasure-garden of Indra producing garlands and wreaths of various kinds (v. 20), diaphanous clothes of variegated hues and gold embroidery (v. 22), ornaments such as necklaces, jewels, earrings, armlets (v. 23), and musical instruments (v. 25).

<sup>3</sup>*Matsya Purāṇa*, Ch. 120 ; *Kumārasambhava*, VIII. 68 and 71.

<sup>4</sup>*Meghadūta*, II. 11 ; also I. 65 ; II. 5.

<sup>5</sup>*Studies in Indian Art*, p. 144.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 191-92, quotes *Divyāvadāna*, pp. 215-16.



are shown suspended, indeed, in postures as though originating from its abundant foliage. Below we have an intimate picture of the "Mithuna" enjoyments around another Wishing tree in the centre. Ornaments and fabrics of various kinds are shown hanging from its boughs. On the left there appear two couples seated on thrones while other groups are exhibited as engaged in music and dancing (*Ills. 35, 36*). On the right in a jungle there are a man and a horse-headed damsel moving away to some private corner.

Most important is the depiction in which Mithunas are shown coming out of the Kalpa-tree branches (*Ill. 28*). This feature of a true Wishing tree growing in the Elysian land of Uttarakuru is mentioned in several of the literary descriptions. This confirms that such portrayals in art present a conscious treatment of the motif by imaginative sculptors.

The Wishing Creeper, or Kalpa-latā, is an easy variation of the Kalpa tree. The meandering creeper decorating the coping entablature of the Bharhut Stūpa railing virtually represents the bountiful Kalpalatā (Wishing Creeper) producing things of all desire for the Mithunas, who themselves have sprung from its convolutions (*Ill. 34*). The Kalpalatā creeper, which is essentially a lotus plant, occupying the horizontal spaces on the railing, is indeed the vegetative life visualised in its fertile luxuriance. Conceived in its ever-expansive movement issued out of its own fertility, or the navel of a Yakṣa, or the mouth of a Makara, it brings forth welcome treasures in the form of foliated meanders of various rhythms and bends with spirits, animals, human beings, and all sorts of articles of beauty and worldly comfort as its plentiful fruits and flowers. A recurrent illustration of the Wishing Creeper forms a regular feature in the decoration of early monuments, railings and gateways, and later also of the carved Stūpa-encasings at Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda in the Deccan.

On the Bharhut railing the subject is treated in a highly pleasant manner and indeed in a direct folk expression. From the winding stems of the Kalpalatā foliage bounteous gifts are shown coming out as blossoms:

Ornaments : earrings, collars, necklaces, wristlets, armlets, girdles, finger-rings, anklets, etc. of many designs;

Fabrics : scarfs, sarees, wrappers of costly stuffs;

Cosmetics : unguents contained in caskets and lac-dye in mango-shaped vessels;

Drinks : various wines in containers of jack-fruit shape and other types.<sup>1</sup>

Under the undulating meanders of the creeper are shown scenes from the Mithuna life and the folk-tales of Buddhist Jātakas in their rustic warmth against a setting of romantic vegetation. Human couples of Mithunas amidst

<sup>1</sup>V.S. Agrawala, *Studies in Indian Art*, pp. 51-52 fn.

the vegetal kingdom of Kalpalatā may indeed be regarded as true to the literary motif of Mithuna-producing Kalpa trees of Uttarakuru. Further, it is interesting to find that the *Matsya Purāṇa* in a stereotyped description of the Great Kalpalatā itself mentions the figures of Vidyādhara and Suparṇa couples in its embellishing features.<sup>1</sup>

In a depiction on the north pillar, front face, of the western gateway of the Great Stūpa at Sanchi, we have a real cross-section of the Mithuna revels in Uttarakuru, portrayed with all its paraphernalia of Wishing trees, wine and music. It is divided into four arboreal compartments, each showing a Mithuna seated on couches under a Wishing tree. Man and woman appear as drinking, conversing and exchanging gestures of love with each other (*Ill.* 32). In one case, the male is shown helping his mistress with her embellishment by extracting necklaces and bracelets from the distended boughs of the Kalpa tree.

Similar portrayals occur in the reliefs of other Sanchi portals (*Ills.* 29-30). One panel shows a Mithuna group enjoying drink (*Ill.* 30). The lady is sitting on the lover's knee as he sips from a cup. Another group shows the couple seated against a rocky background enjoying music played on a harp by the male (*Ill.* 31).

A variation or even abbreviation in the representation of this theme can be easily recognised in art portrayals. Sometimes the creeper is shown as the border decoration of a scene in the life of the Buddha; in such cases the details of Mithuna pleasures are, however, eliminated. Sometimes, side by side with the representation of the Master, there appear on other panels of the same sculpture, Mithuna figures in their characteristic lewd attitudes (*Ills.* 79-80).

More or less a conventional persistence of the allied themes of the Kalpalatā or Kalpa tree and the Mithuna is traceable in its later history in such art portrayals as show an auspicious couple standing under the shade of a tree or foliage (*Ills.* 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, etc.).

An outstanding representation of the Kalpalatā and the Mithuna in the clime of abundant happiness is seen on the doorway carving of Cave III at Nasik (*Ill.* 110). Here we find on the lintel a pleasing lotus-creeper studded with the gift of ornaments, and on the jambs, amorous couples in superimposed panels. This indeed is one early composition of its kind that induced the combined motif of the auspicious creeper and the Mithuna "branch" (*śākhā*) as a regular feature in the doorframe decoration of the Gupta and later temples.

In the art of the Gupta period (c. 4th cent.—6th cent. AD) and onwards, a remarkable variety of Kalpalatā appears on the temple pillars and entrances. In one type, female figures are shown clinging to the tendrils of the creeper (*Ills.* 45-46). The other variant design represents frolicsome dwarfish males or

<sup>1</sup>*Matsya Purāṇa*, 286. 4.

Gaṇa figures in details of the floral scroll. In other compositions, the Mithuna and the Creeper occur side by side on the vertical spaces of the door-jambs of temples. But in such cases the ideology of Kalpalatā seems to be only remotely recognised (*Ill. 111*). Evidently the Mithuna has already separated from the Uttarakuru and Kalpalatā context as a full-fledged motif of human abundance and beatitude.

## Chapter Four

# MITHUNA AND DAMPATI

A distinction of the Mithuna concept appears in the husband-and-wife definition of the male-and-female. It is styled as the DAMPATI, that is the married couple. A common lover-and-beloved group may have the male on the left of the female but not in the *Dampati* Mithuna in accordance with the Dharma regulation. In *Dampati* the position of the female is conceived of on the left hand side of the male (*Ills.* 35, 36, 42, 43, 49, 71, 72). As is stated in the *Brāhmaṇa* texts while explaining sacrificial rituals: The man should sleep at the right side of the woman.<sup>1</sup> The woman lies on the left side of the husband.<sup>2</sup> This ritual observance or concept, presumably, gave origin to the word 'vāmā' for a female or the wife, and later on certain Tantric rites in continuation of this meaning were classified under the *Vāmācārā*,<sup>3</sup> i.e. Left-hand Conduct.

A great truth comprehended in simple phrases by a Ṛgvedic seer is as follows : "He who has made this does not comprehend it. From him who saw this it is hidden. He having been enveloped in the matrix to multiply in the many was sunk into calamity."<sup>4</sup> Likewise the *Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa* expresses this : "The Creator having become Kāma became Infinite, and having become Infinite became Death."<sup>5</sup> In other words, the immortality in man has always to combat with the mortality he has accepted. Thus he has always to seek his refuge of immortality into his mortal actions, therefore, all this regulation on the social plane.

<sup>1</sup>*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, VI. 3.1.30; VII. 5.1.6; *Jaiminiya Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa*, I. 53.3

<sup>2</sup>*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, I. 1.1.20; II. 5.2.17; IV. 4.2.16; also VIII. 4.4.11. Similar is the injunction about sexual intercourse to take place in privacy : "This is womb; and this is seed, and in secret, as it were, the seed is infused into womb : it is thus made of the form of the womb; and therefore it is only in secret that one would have intercourse even with one's own wife."———  
*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, VI. 4.4.19, translation by Eggeling, Oxford, 1894, pp. 228-29.

<sup>3</sup>D. P. Chattopadhyaya, *Lokāyata*, 2nd ed., New Delhi, 1968, pp. 278, 284-85.

<sup>4</sup>*Ṛgveda*, I. 164. 32; Agrawala, *Vision in Long Darkness*, pp. 115-16.

<sup>5</sup>*Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa*, I. 314.

Scattered over the entire earthly existence is the all-pervasive Kāma, Desire, in the form of tiny dusty clouds that hinder human vision. He who transcends them has real entry into the abode of Light. There can be two ideals to win over Desire. Śiva, the Great God, conquered this Kāma in one way. The Buddha or Jina did subdue this Evil One in another way. Śiva's is the way of a Dampati or Householder. Buddha's is the way of an Ascetic. The one is a positive way of satisfying the fires of Desire; the other, a negative way of extinguishing them at their very source.

It is the Way of Dampati that has been shown to *desirous* human beings for reaching the destination of self-satisfaction in accordance with the laws of Nature. Says the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* : "She, the wife, in sooth is one half of man's own self; hence, as long as he does not obtain her, so long he is not regenerated, for so long he is incomplete. But as soon as he obtains her he is regenerated, for then he is complete. 'Complete I want to go to that supreme goal,' thus (he thinks) and therefore addresses his wife."<sup>1</sup> The Dampati who is indeed the pivot of society is highly eulogised as early as the *Rgveda* :

"O Gods, the husband and wife who with one mind offer libations and purify them with the Soma-juice ever mixed with milk,—

Constantly associated, they acquire appropriate sacrificial viands and offer sacrifice. And never do they fail in strength.

Never they deny or seek to hide the favour of the gods; they win high glory for themselves.

Blessed with youthful and adolescent offspring, they reach their full extent of life, both decked with ornaments of gold.

Offering acceptable sacrifices, obtaining the wealth they solicit, presenting oblations (to the gods), for the sake of immortality enjoying personal union, they pay due honour to the gods."<sup>2</sup>

The idealistic view of the Indian society and life has been elaborated in the Dharma-śāstra literature. All texts with one voice accord the greatest merit to the order of the householder.<sup>3</sup> The epics have gone into rapture in appraising Marriage and Family as well as the fruits of joyful life attained thereby. At one place it is stated in the following glowing words : "Wife is the very root of Human Goals, not only of Dharma, Artha and Kāma, but even of Mokṣa. Those that have wife can fulfil their due obligations in this world; only they truly lead a pleasant life and can be happy, and their lives only are full and gifted."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, V. 2.1.10, translation by Eggeling, Oxford, 1894, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>*Rgveda*, VIII. 31. 5-9.

<sup>3</sup>P.V.Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, II, pt. I, Poona, 1941, pp. 424-25; P.N. Prabhu, *Hindu Social Organisation*, 3rd edn., Bombay, 1958, pp. 93-6.

<sup>4</sup>*Mahābhārata*, I. 74. 40-41. Further see *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, III. 224. 22-32.

Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa are the Human Goals, Puruṣārthas. This doctrine of Puruṣārtha, developed by ancient Indian thinkers as a socio-religious philosophy, had already become a guiding feature of Indian life by the time of the Sūtra<sup>1</sup> and Epic literature<sup>2</sup> (c. 6th cent. BC—4th cent. BC). Dharma, the proper conduct with respect to religion and ethics, may be understood in terms of man's relationship with himself, other fellow beings and superhuman forces of gods and elements. Artha, the accumulation of wealth or worldly resources, is the prime basis of his economic existence sustaining his religious and social activities. Kāma is the fulfilment of desires and instincts inherent in man by nature. The Fourth, that is to say Mokṣa, is the unknown and after-life concept of Salvation implying emancipation from all the three worldly goals and is believed to represent the negation of all mortal indulgence. Thus the first Three Goals, collectively called Trivarga, i.e., a group of three, belong to this world proper and Mokṣa, thus named Fourth, Turiya, aims beyond it.

Kauṭilya (about 300 BC) is one of the earliest celebrated authorities to bring out a harmonious perspective on the threefold objective of human life. According to him, "Kāma is to be enjoyed without violating Dharma and Artha. Never should one be without happiness. One should enjoy in an equal degree the three pursuits of life, that is Dharma, Artha and Kāma, which are interdependent upon one another. Any one of these three, when enjoyed to an excess, hurts not only the other two, but also itself."<sup>3</sup> But as this author was primarily concerned with the statecraft and politico-economic affairs, elsewhere he considers Artha of first significance in the life of a king. "Artha, Dharma and Kāma form the aggregate of the three kinds of Aim. Of these, it is better to secure that which is mentioned first than that which is subsequently mentioned in the above order."<sup>4</sup> Similarly the Dharmaśāstra writers dealing with socio-religious laws approached the problem from their own angle of Dharma. But they too advocate a harmonious and regulated pursuit of the triple aim as the only justified and approved way of life both for the individual and the society.

Likewise, the following is the verdict of Vātsyāyana<sup>5</sup> on the harmony and mutual adjustment of Human Goals in the psycho-moral evolution of man's life: "The man who has normally a hundred years as his life span, should pursue the Trivarga, having allotted proper time to each of them, in a manner that they coordinate together and do not militate against one another. The aim is to acquire knowledge etc. in childhood, Artha and Kāma in youth, and Dharma and Mokṣa in old age." To understand Puruṣārthas as regards

<sup>1</sup>*Hiranyakeśi Gṛhyasūtra*, II. 19. 6; Patañjali on Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, II. 2. 34. Earlier, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, III. 5-mentions the 'desires' as guiding human pursuits.

<sup>2</sup>P.N. Prabhu, op. cit., pp. 79-81.

<sup>3</sup>*Arthaśāstra*, I. 7.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, IX. 7.

<sup>5</sup>*Kāmasūtra*, I. 2. 1-4.

their interdependence on one another and integrated composition in a man's personality, we may have an analogy. It is like a prismatic individual-consciousness of which the three constituting facets are represented by Dharma, Artha and Kāma. View it from any side the variegated reflection of the other two sides could hardly be avoided. From all its points it is always trying to aim at a transcending goal that is Salvation or Universal Consciousness.

From the stage of promiscuous Mithuna the motif now came to be transformed into Dampati. But it is the same arch symbol of Mithuna that has its twofold modality in rather academic categories of Mithuna and Dampati. The artist while showing *Dampati* Mithuna appears to seek social approval for the theme of amorous indulgence of his eternal male-female characters although hardly any change is to be witnessed in his attitude in treating the subject which he dwelt upon more freely and conventionally.

One may find the concept of Mithuna or Dampati calling for a social set-up even in the pantheon of gods and goddesses. It was as early as the Vedic period that each male god or divine being was supposed to have his female consort. More or less the grouping of divinities came to be governed by the underlying idea of Mithuna duality of male and female. But initially a grammatical kind of divine Mithuna seems to have been quite popular : Indra-Indrāṇi, Agni-Agnāyī, Varuṇa-Varuṇāni, Deva-Devī, Yakṣa-Yakṣiṇi, Suparṇa-Suparṇī, Nāga-Nāgī, Kinnara-Kinnarī. One important exception is the Gandharva and Apsaras pair, that is actually defined to be an exemplar of the Mithuna ideology : "From Prajāpati, when dismembered, couples went forth in the form of Gandharvas and Apsarases."<sup>1</sup> They conjointly are lauded as presiding over the marital life in all its delights and joys.<sup>2</sup>

But it is about the beginning of the Christian era, that this motif of grouping gods and goddesses in regular Dampati or consort pair reached the height of its vigour and religious fervour. A definite stage in the formulations of art and mythology is marked by this tendency of having for a male god a female spouse from the list of the leading goddesses, and for a female deity a male counterpart as her husband. In some cases there evolved also an elaborate myth about the wedding of the divine couple, who were also to be the parents of children according to the full-fledged Dampati ideal.

Thus we have the married Mithuna of the Great God and the Great Goddess, namely Rudra-Śiva and Ambikā-Pārvati (*Ills.* 50, 53). Rudra, the phallic god is stated to be the Lord of Yoni, the cosmic matrix.<sup>3</sup> He is invariably shown with the erect phallus and in constant company of the goddess. His is the unique exploit suggesting his divine glorification in

<sup>1</sup>*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, IX. 4.1.2, translation by Eggeling, Oxford, 1897, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup>*Atharvaveda*, XIV. 2. 9; XIV. 2. 34-35; also *Rgveda*, X. 10. 4-5. For their constant pair, see *Atharvaveda*, II. 2. 5; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, IX. 4.1.2-12; *Jaiminiya Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa*, III. 25. 4. and III. 25.8.

<sup>3</sup>*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, IV. 11; V. 2.

conquering the God-of-Love through a technique peculiar to him. It is in perennial conjugation with his female Energy, Śakti, that he wins over for ever the lewd passions of Kāma. Indeed it is the ideal set up by him to be followed by his devout votaries through their exalted potency of mind. This motif appears to have been perfected in the Ardhanārīśvara image (*Ills. 20, 54, 230*). In it the male and the female attributes are considered not as undeveloped or underdeveloped, as may be the case in a hermaphrodite. Both are here in fact understood in their elemental existence yet balanced to a complete satisfaction in a syzygy. The Ardhanārīśvara is thus a symbol of perfect equilibrium above the level of sexual irritations that actually serves as the substratum of this duplex creation.

The other pair is that of the god Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu and the goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī (*Ill. 55*). It is doubtless a sophisticated Dampati as compared to the Śaivite one. In the Śeṣaśāyī image, we see the god, who has the entire creation withdrawn into his person, resting in his Yoga Sleep on the cosmic serpent and the active goddess, shampooing his feet (*Ills. 57-58*). Viṣṇu in his Boar incarnation has his pair with the goddess Earth; the image shows the mighty god lifting up the Earth goddess on the support of his arm (*Ill. 56*).

Brahmā constitutes his pair with Sarasvatī (*Ill. 59*). The other eminent Dampati pair is that of Kubera and Hārītī who represent the kindred tutelary couple in popular worship (*Ill. 61*). In most of the cases the deities whether tutelary or high are regarded to have their male or female counterpart (*Ill. 60*). This, however, is thus a distinct feature of the pantheon inspired by the Mithuna and Dampati ideology and achieved in all Indian creeds at various stages of their development.

The symbiosis of Liṅga and Yoni, the Yab-yum or Yuganaddha image of the universal parents (*Ill. 237*), the image of Śakti and Puruṣa: these are in a way nothing but the supreme edifications of the same concept in its metaphysical formulations. The essential Mithuna as Dampati motif can hardly be missed in such exoteric revelations in art on the mystic reality.

Equally efficacious has been the formulation of Dampati on secular and human level. The robust male and female figures shown on the façades of the rock-cut Caitya halls of Western India will be found to represent the delights of ideal Dampati householders (*Ills. 65, 66*). Some of them are perhaps the portraits of those Gahapati donors, who are known from their inscriptions in the caves to have caused the raising of these monuments by their liberal munificences and patronage. They are shown standing in confident poses, with attainments of their Puruṣārthas writ large on their faces. The sturdy and abundant bodily form, the rich and choice ornaments, the profuse headdresses and a proud turban on the head in case of the male figures, all stand in eloquent proof of their worldly success and suffusing gratification. In representing these figures the sculptor has undoubtedly excelled in his mastery of conceiving the outward bodily form as an expression to the inner abundance. His study of the living human form was indeed so devoted to be a distinct



symbol of the outburst of an emphatic happiness, which is, in fact, a compliment to human beings on their full possession of the worldly pleasures.

The above Dampati are shown mostly in restricted postures, usually the male and the female standing side by side, or sometimes in dancing attitudes. In somewhat similar behaviours the Dampati figures will be recognised as treated in the Stūpa sculpture of Central India and the Deccan (*Ills. 64, 67, 98-100*). They often appear in the garb of common worshipping folks flanking or approaching the deity or his symbol.<sup>1</sup> An enormous stone upright (ht 16 ft) of the second century AD from Mathura is of particular significance as it shows on its two carved faces a vertical composition of identical detail, each comprising of eight square compartments with the one on the top bearing a seated Buddha and the one at the bottom a prince in adoration. The six intervening panels depict standing couples in worshipful attitudes carrying garlands.<sup>2</sup> It is but an evolved iconographic aspect of the Dampati or householder couples that we find them represented in some early images on either side of the feet of a Jina or a Buddha figure (*Ills. 68, 69*). However, in the Jaina images subsequently these devotee couples came to be interpreted as the first lay disciples of the Tirthankaras and identified as male and female attendant divinities called Yakṣa-Yakṣiṇī or Śāsana-devatās, a distinct iconographic pair for each of the twentyfour Jinas. A variation of the same theme may be recognised in the Tantric Buddhist iconography. For example, the different forms of Avalokiteśvara have been given their particular pairs of ancillary divinities, a male and a female (*Ill. 70*).

A picture of the private affairs of the Dampati life also provided a full-fledged subject for the artist expressed through a set scheme of illustration. Apart from the stone sculpture this fact is also well amplified by a type of early terracotta plaques discovered from various sites in northern India (*Ills. 35, 36, 72, 73*). On them one finds the representation of men and women in different erotic situations. The scene is often set against a picturesque background of nature. This simply shows the common acceptance of the Mithuna theme on art's folk level. From Kausambi, Ahichchhatra, Patna, Rajghat (Varanasi) and other places a good number of such Mithuna or Dampati plaques has been found (*Ills. 8, 35, 36, 72, 73*); in cases they show distinct motifs of wanton indulgence and bacchanalian revelries. Some metal pieces (*Ills. 62, 71*) of similar antiquity and style showing this subject in equally fascinating manner may also be mentioned.

On Mathura railing pillars, the Dampati enjoying their love in a programme of amorous pleasures occur as part of a recurring motif of sculptural embellishment on which the interest and skill of the artist seem to have centred

<sup>1</sup>A.K. Coomaraswamy, *La Sculpture de Bharhut*, Paris, 1956, figs. 27, 59, 62, 65, 66; J. Burgess, *The Buddhist Stūpas of Amaravati and Jagguyyapeta*, London, 1887, pls. XXVII-I, XXXII, XXXVIII-IX, XLVI-I, L.

<sup>2</sup>K.D Bajpai, 'New Buddhist Finds from Mathura,' *Lalit Kalā*, nos. 3-4, 1956-57, p. 104, figs. 5, 8-10.

for an absorbed moment despite all religiosity and sacred nature of the monument. Such pleasure scenes shown in upper panels (*Ills. 76, 154*) of the railing pillars appear in befitting position above the standing Yakṣi or dryad figures. The Yakṣi statue in each case is conceived by the sculptor to be a virtual embodiment of all fleshly sensuousness and passionate beauty. On some of the pillars there are Mithuna amours (*Ills. 48, 77-78*) delineated in several superimposed panels with as much interest and freedom as any other sacred motif. They represent in fact a set of scenes from real acts of love beginning with playful pastimes and ending with sexual consummation. A list of items in the programme of carnal enjoyments, as shown in art and described by poets, appears to have usually included the following : garden sports, water sports, embellishment of the body, drinking revelry, music, dance and amorous indulgence.

Varieties of description of such Dampati or Mithuna pleasures are found right from the beginning of the Indian classical poetry, in the works of Aśvaghoṣa, Kālidāsa, Bhāṛavi, Māgha and others,<sup>1</sup> and in later poets of Sanskrit and Prakrit as well as in the regional vernaculars. This had come to be standardised quite early as an essential requisite of the classical poetry. Every epic poet was to treat this theme with all his ability to abide by the poetic conventions, which we find systematised and discussed in detail with respect to their earlier tradition by the literary theorists of the subsequent ages.<sup>2</sup>

On a second century pillar from Mathura we find a remarkable treatment of the intimate pastimes of a lovely young couple. It has been identified<sup>3</sup> to represent the palace life of Nanda and his wife Sundarī (*Ills. 77-78*) on the authority of the narrative found in Aśvaghoṣa's poem, *Saundarananda*, which has, in an epic style, immortalised the charms and chagrins in the life-story of Buddha's brother Nanda. The eight scenes on two faces of the pillar illustrate in expressive series the amorous pleasures of the Nanda Dampati as they are treated by the poet in his work.

“The twain dallied blindly together, as if they were a target for the God of Love and Rati (*Ills. 200, 201*), or a nest to hold Delight and Joy or vessels for Pleasure and Satisfaction. The pair attracted each other mutually, with their eyes engaged solely in gazing each other, with their minds intent solely on each other's conversation and with their body-paint rubbed off by their mutual embraces. The pair brought ecstasy to each other with the increase of their mutual passion and in the intervals

<sup>1</sup>For several choice citations from the classical Sanskrit poetry, see C. Sivaramamurti, *Sanskrit Literature and Art—Mirrors of Indian Culture*, Delhi, 1955. pp. 13-50.

<sup>2</sup>See Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa*, I. 16-17; *Agni Purāṇa*, 336. 30; Viśvanātha's *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, VI. 579; Hemacandra's *Kāvyānuśāsana*, Bombay, 1934, p. 403.

<sup>3</sup>V.S.Agrawala, 'Palace-scenes on a Mathura Pillar,' *JUPHS*, XIX, 1946, pp. 56-60.

of exhaustion they sportively intoxicated each other by way of mutual refreshment. Once he covered her with ornaments, not that she should be decorated, but simply in order to serve her.

She laughed inwardly in her mind at the playful trick and naughtiness of her lord, but pretending to be angry with him, she crinkled up her forehead and frowned at him.

She clasped him with her arms, so that the string of pearls swung loose from her breasts, and raised him up. 'What a sight you are,' she said and laughed out loud with the earrings hanging across her face. Then looking repeatedly at the face of her husband who had the mirror in his hand, she completed the painting on her cheeks, the surface of which was wet from the *tamāla* leaf.

Then Nanda respectfully held the mirror which bore witness to her decoration (by its reflection) and, turning his eyes sideways to see the paint, beheld the mischievous face of his mistress."<sup>1</sup>

Somewhat free and frank representation of the theme occurs in independent panels in the art of the Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda school (*Ills.* 79-82). Further on in the tradition the rock-cut shrines at Ajanta (*Ills.* 115-20), Aurangabad and Ellora (*Ills.* 105-06), and the Western Cālukya temple-cities of Badami, Aihole and Pattadakal (*Ills.* 43, 84-5, 121-24, 140-41, 205) show in their rich sculptural compositions a variety of delightful scenes of the Dampati lovers on entrances, door-lintels, pillars, walls and ceilings. Sometimes they are guised as flying celestials in intimate love poses. In later medieval art, the theme of loving couples comes to occupy enclosed recessed panels mainly on the exterior of the temple walls. Inside the shrine the image of the divine Dampati is consecrated in a quiescent presence and identified as Śiva and Pārvati, Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī, or the Great God and the Goddess in their supreme glorification and no human element of indulgence is suggested to the devotee.

<sup>1</sup>E.H. Johnston, *The Saundarananda*, London, 1932, pp. 20-22 : canto IV, verses 8-9, 11-12, 15, 19-20, 22.

## Chapter Five

# MITHUNA, A MOTIF

At one stage of its symbolic abstraction the Mithuna idea is reduced to a motif of beatification and human plenty. As such the pair of male and female stands as an exemplary model of the creation and its fertility. There is also associated with it some apotropaic quality as all symbols of beauty and weal are supposed to convey through them. For auspicious purposes the intrinsic charm of a figure of human couple seems to have been understood and used from times immemorial. For example, it is best illustrated on an elongated seal from Mohenjodaro (*Ill.* 87). Enclosed between two giant horns there are two figures representing distinctly the outlines of a male and a female. An attacking rhinoceros stands away from them. Obviously the magic efficacy of the pair of horns serves here as the protection of the Mithuna against the animal. Several duplicates of the seal<sup>1</sup> were discovered which portray the motif in equally forceful representation, implying presumably some magical rite for the growth of human progeny and its preservation against formidable animals like rhinoceros. In primitive beliefs the horn was universally known to have symbolised superhuman powers and effective magic. In the Indus Valley also the horn appears to be regarded as a visible attribute of the divinity and its utility in fertility rites is equally undoubted.<sup>2</sup>

A terracotta sealing from the Harappan deposits at Chanhudaro<sup>3</sup> illustrates a theme of tree worship. Under the stylised figure of a Peepul or bo-tree a human couple stands flanking and touching with their hand the trunk of the tree in the act of veneration (*Ill.* 89). The depiction obviously uses the

<sup>1</sup>Marshall, *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization*, pl. CII, h ; CXVI, 10, 11 and 13; E.J. Mackay, *Further Excavations at Mohenjodaro*, New Delhi, 1938, pl. LXXII, 8-10.

<sup>2</sup>Marshall, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-55; Moti Chandra, *loc. cit.*, pp. 1 ff.

<sup>3</sup>E.J. Mackay, *Chanhudaro Excavations*, New Haven, Connecticut, 1943, pl. LII, 36; LXXVII, 1, pp. 149-50.

Mithuna of man and woman as a motif to represent the human society in general. Another Harappan seal, found in as many as seven terracotta impressions at Kalibangan, seems to depict in a more or less similar bearing a pair of standing man and woman along with other symbols (*Ill. 88*).

Even in the primitive cultus, a representation of Mithuna, particularly in the attitude of sexual union, appears to have been conceived as a symbol for magico-religious purposes. It was obviously not an isolated illustration of the particular physical act but a charm ensuring human fertility and propagation. Several of the primitive paintings of this theme also occur in the rock-shelters of Pachmadhi in Madhya Pradesh. In these portrayals, though the style of drawing is very sketchy and gives only suggestive outlines, the figures are distinctively recognised as male and female standing together (*Ill. 90*). Besides, there are certain prehistoric or primitive rock engravings found in the Raichur and Bellary districts of Andhra Pradesh that are "depictions of men and women engaged in some form of sexual intercourse."<sup>1</sup> A fertility meaning for some of the scenes is, however, beyond question.

A pottery bowl discovered at the proto-historic site of Daimabad, District Ahmadnagar, Maharashtra, shows on its inside a painted design that suggests a Mithuna in cohabitation.<sup>2</sup> The style of representation is primitive and conventionalised showing stick-like human torso with a knob for head and some line strokes for hands and legs (*Ill. 91*). The figures of man and woman are indicated as lying flat on the ground against each other with their widened legs combined close together. The distinct male genital conveys the idea of copulation and the identity of the female is featured by two lines below the head for hairdress.

In liturgical exegesis of the Brāhmaṇa texts a number of sacrificial rituals are given a fertility explanation based on the concept of Mithuna or pair. For example, "For the altar is female and the fire is male; and the woman lies embracing the man : thereby a copulation (*mithuna*), productive of offspring is obtained."<sup>3</sup>

"At the beginning of his sacrifice he brings about a pairing : for the sake of obtaining progeny."<sup>4</sup>

"He who knows the Mithuna of the fore-sacrifice is propagated with offspring, with cattle, with Mithunas."<sup>5</sup>

"The pots and the pans make pairs, for the propagation of pairing; with offspring, with cattle, with Mithunas is he propagated for whom these are put down and he who knows them thus."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>D.H. Gordon, *The Pre-historic Background of Indian Culture*, Bombay, 1958, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup>*Indian Archaeology 1958-59 — A Review*, p. 16, fig. 7.

<sup>3</sup>*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, I. 2.5.15.

<sup>4</sup>*Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa*, XIV. 5.4.

<sup>5</sup>*Īaittirīya Samhitā*, II. 6.1.4.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, V. 6.2.3.

Quite frequently in the later Vedic texts there occurs the following aphoristic statement : “By the efficacy of Mithuna, human generation and animals are multiplied. This is Mithuna. For it the person (sacrificer) is prosperous with progeny and cattle.”<sup>1</sup> As a sort of proverbial saying some such expressions are met with that explicitly involve the Mithuna symbolism : “May I be propagated by a Mithuna.”<sup>2</sup>

A hymn of the *Atharvaveda* informs us that the motif of a couple or Mithuna was used as a branded mark on the ears of cows. It is further stated that this was already an ancient practice followed by the gods, the demons and the men ensuring the multiple growth in thousands of cattle.<sup>3</sup>

This Mithuna or man-woman mark has been identified in the group of symbols occurring on the earliest coinage (c. 800 BC—200 BC) of India (Ill. 92). The popular series of these punch-marked coins show it as one of the auspicious symbols accepted widely in people’s consciousness. This motif of a Mithuna continued to be shown on local coin series is attested to by a variety of the Ujjain coinage of about 200 BC showing on their obverse a standing couple elegantly dressed and ornamented.<sup>4</sup>

On early Indian monuments which survive in their continuity only from the third-second century BC onwards, the motif seems to have already found its due place and elaboration by the artist. Its antecedents in the immediately preceding art tradition of wooden and other ephemeral materials are indeed lost to us besides a few gleanings from stray finds of minor relics.

As noted above, the punch-marked coins show the man-woman representation in some of their series which presumably antedate the Mauryan period (Ill. 92). Of pre-Mauryan or early Mauryan antiquity, we have a class of stone discs<sup>5</sup> that portray a mother-goddess usually in association with floral and animal symbols (Ills. 93, 222). The fragment of one such annular stone found in the excavations at Rupar, portrays the human couple in some ritualistic performance beside the figure of the nude goddess. Allied to this group of antiquities, a plaque of probably pre-Mauryan date comes from Rajgir (Ill. 94). On it occur three scenes in superimposed compartments representing evidently the fertility rites dedicated to the goddess, seen in the lowermost section. The two upper panels show a Mithuna or Dampati in dance, music and drink orgies. A small stone tablet from Kausambi has to show an early example of the Mithuna or Dampati portrayal (Ill. 95). In a self-evident fertility significance and auspicious bearing both the figures are frontally standing

<sup>1</sup> *Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā*, I. 8.3; I. 9.8; I. 10.7; II. 3.7; II. 5.5.

<sup>2</sup> *Taittirīya Samhitā*, I. 6.4.4; I. 7.4.5; II. 4.6.2; etc.

<sup>3</sup> *Atharvaveda*, VI. 141.2.

<sup>4</sup> J. Allan, *Catalogue of the Coins of Ancient India*, British Museum, London, 1936, pl. XXXVI, 1-3.

<sup>5</sup> Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, New York, 1927, p. 10; Agrawala, *Indian Art*, pp. 77ff.

and nude and the female figure is allied in iconography to the Mother-goddess.

In the foregoing pages we have noted the early occurrence of male-female figures on the early Stūpa railings and the façades of Caitya-halls of Central, Eastern and Western India (*Ills.* 27-34, 37-41, 64-67, 104). As can be very well gathered, the theme of Mithuna was widely popular and also cherished by the Indian artist as a motif of common fascination during the centuries before and after the Christian era (*Ills.* 35-36, 62, 71-5). It was in fact considered a symbol of human plenty and prosperity in spite of its full erotic connotations in cases. As such we find its portrayal as an intimately familiar subject even on the sacred edifices and monuments right from the very early Stūpas up to the temples of later evolution.

As a simple motif standing exemplary to the fertility implications of human abundance and in association with the cult of the Mother-goddess, the Mithuna of man-woman will be seen in the relief of a rail-post of Sanchi Stūpa II, c. 200 BC. It is a vertical composition of a lotus creeper that stems out with its foliage from the mouth of a tortoise and has the goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī, the presiding deity of abundance and beauty, poised on its uppermost blossoms; in between appear from below in a successive ascent, the figures of a pair (i.e. Mithuna) of horned cattle, of a pair (i.e. Mithuna) of human-faced lions and a Mithuna of man-and-woman (*Ill.* 96-97). This is, however, not a unique representation for there are several such meaningful depictions on the Stūpa II railing itself at Sanchi (*Ills.* 98-100). Allied to these indeed is also a depiction of the goddess Gaja-Lakṣmī as flanked on either side by pairs of dancing man and woman composed inside the petals of an expanded lotus-flower carving on the semi-circular pediment of the Caitya-hall at Manmodi hill near Junnar belonging to the first century BC.<sup>1</sup>

Similar seems to be the significance of an ornate composition on a gateway pillar of the Bodhgaya railing. It has a prominent square panel in the middle portion showing Mithuna figure with man and woman standing side by side in intimate attitude. The half medallion on the top depicts the Goddess Lakṣmī and another at the bottom a lotus design. It is significant that this same arrangement of embellishment appears on two carved faces of the pillar; the middle reliefs representing the Mithuna figures have a similar treatment, and the bevelled corners of the pillar show hanging garlands as connecting symbols of the reliefs above and below.<sup>2</sup>

In several Sanchi and Bharhut bas-reliefs, a devotee-couple is seen standing before a sacred symbol, a tree or pillar (*Ills.* 98-100). They are shown standing close together though no particular amorous suggestion is indicated by their gestures. Sometimes a couple appears all alone in a decorative roundel (*Ill.* 101). That it was a depiction of the Mithuna or Dampati motif

<sup>1</sup>Fergusson and Burgess, *Cave Temples of India*, London, 1880, frontispiece; Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, fig. 30.

<sup>2</sup>Agrawala, *Indian Art*, pl. XXXI, fig. 89 a.

in its own simple symbology is apparent and hardly needs further testimony.

On the bevelled edges of several railing posts from Bharhut, we find standing figures of a male and a female occupying the spaces between the lotus tondi. It represents the Mithuna motif in its simple decorative and auspicious utility.<sup>1</sup> Its presence like any other auspicious symbol indeed was to eliminate the inauspiciousness or 'unholiness' of the plain surface, that was believed to be otherwise under the auspices of the evil. In the words of the author of the *Divyāvadāna*,<sup>2</sup> this, as all motifs of art are, was to serve both a decorative as well as an apotropaic purpose. In fact, according to the Indian belief, an artistic symbol, as it were, is to defeat void, emptiness, negation or ugliness, that would at once flit away elsewhere in the presence of a beatific symbol.

In the light of the above, the Mithuna must be understood as one plain and simple symbol in the repertoire of the early art motifs. Its further elaboration in form and representation will be found to render primarily the common purpose of decoration (*Ills. 102-03*). For its outstanding artistic and festive merit, the motif had an uninterrupted continuity in the architectural tradition of the country and came to be a regular and standardised feature in the sculpture of the temple frontages. Most of the Indian temples, right from their modest beginnings in the Gupta period, have to show the Mithuna figures treated in an expressive style on their façades, especially in the carving of the side jambs of the entrance. The contemporary Śilpa-śāstras or architectural treatises are clear on this point and give specific injunctions with respect to the representation of this motif in temple sculpture.

The beginning of this element on the temple entrance may be traced back to the early practice of showing the Mithuna and Dampati figures particularly on façades of the rock-cut caves of the Deccan. Not only on the lower portions of the walls in the verandah the large panels on either side of the entrance portray standing Mithuna and Dampati couples, but there are also found sometimes runs of friezes of such figures above the doorway and on either side of the great sun-window arch or at the same level on side walls. The best preserved early instances are at Kondane (*Ill. 104*) and Karla (*Ills. 65-6*). By way of comparison we should also refer to the recurrence of this feature in the rock-cut architecture at Ellora; the Viśvakarmā Caitya-hall (7th century AD) shows horizontal series of such panels above and below the ornamental Caitya-window opening (*Ills. 105-06*).

Further, a reference may be made in this respect to a few reliefs from Amaravati<sup>3</sup> and elsewhere in the Deccan (*Ill. 108*) which show human couples standing in devotion on either side of the sacred symbol. The most pertinent

<sup>1</sup>e.g. see Coomaraswamy, *La Sculpture de Bharhut*, figs. 56, 88, 105-07.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted by Agrawala, *Indian Art*, p. 15 (*Divyāvadāna*, Cowell's edn, p. 221).

<sup>3</sup>Burgess, *The Buddhist Stūpas of Amaravati and Jaggayyapeta*, pl. XII, 1; XXXII, 3; XXXVIII, 1, 4 and 7; XL, 3; L, 2.



are the two or three Amaravati sculptures depicting a Dharmacakra-pillar flanked by several couple figures, that, one above the other, make a vertical series of the Mithuna theme on either side (*Ill. 109*). Of almost the same period or somewhat earlier, several pilaster fragments (*Ill. 107*) discovered in the debris of the forecourt in Cave IV at Pitalkhora also evince a depiction of Mithunas in superposed sections.<sup>1</sup> It is likely that these belonged to the doorway ornamentation. A reference may also be made to certain uprights found at Mathura from the Kuṣāṇa period that show Dampati devotees in compartments one above the other (*ante*, p. 28). But unique of its kind in pre-Gupta art is the doorway carving in Cave III at Nasik (2nd century AD) which is hitherto known as the earliest doorframe composition showing friezes of Mithuna scenes on either jamb (*Ill. 110*).

Details from doorway sculpture (*Ills. 111-14, 118, 136*) in early temples and cave-shrines will suffice to illustrate that the Mithuna motif had its proper share in such compositions of embellishing character. To some this may appear quite unassuming in comparison to the great elaboration of the Mithuna subject in the medieval temples of Khajuraho or Orissa. But such a comparison is likely to be misleading. For we are to mark that in the earliest group of temples (4th-5th cent. AD), it is the doorway that served as the best decorated portion of the monument. Apart from the idol installed in the sanctum, it was here that the utmost care was taken in employing decorative symbols and motifs to enrich the temple in its sculptural beauty and dignity. The walls at this stage of temple architecture are just plain inside and outside. It is in the next phase of its development (c. 6th-8th cent. AD) that the temple exterior tended to evolve both in its structural assumption and plastic wealth. This architecture, however, seems to have reached its optimum growth only in subsequent times with the great centres of art at Khajuraho, Bhubaneswar, Abu, Tanjore and elsewhere.

The entrance of the early Gupta period temple at Nachna Kuthara (c. 450 AD) displays on either side a band of Mithuna scenes in superimposed panels. The male and the female are shown exchanging their love in different attitudes but with refined and elegant expressions that are remarkable in most of the doorframe reliefs (*Ill. 111*). Similarly the rock-cut Gupta sanctuary (called "Amṛta Cave", c. 450 AD) at Udaigiri has a vertical composition of Mithuna figures in doorway sculpture (*Ill. 112*). Another example illustrated is from the Gupta temple of Viṣṇu at Devagarh (c. 450 AD), treating the motif in several combinations of male-female lovers in the flourishing and expressive style of the period (*Ill. 113*). The exquisitely carved doorways of c. 500-625 AD in Caves I, II, IV, V, XVII, XXII-XXIV, XXVI (*Ill. 118*) at Ajanta, for example, show similarly posed figures forming full-fledged "branches" (*śākhā*) of amorous couples.

<sup>1</sup>*Ancient India*, no. 15, New Delhi, 1959, pls. LX and LXII.

The *Bṛhatsamhitā* of Varāhamihira (5th cent. AD) is perhaps the earliest of such texts that describe in detail a typical Gupta doorframe with distinct elements of decoration. "A door consisting of three, five, seven or nine *śākhās* (posts or bands in the frame on each side) is highly commended. Now, one-quarter of the door-jamb height at the bottom should be occupied by the two figures (one on each side) of door-keepers. The remaining space should be ornamented (in several of the bands) with the carvings of auspicious geese, auspicious tree motifs, Svastika, Full Vases, Mithunas, foliated scrolls and dwarfish figures."<sup>1</sup>

The architectural text preserved in the *Agni Purāṇa*<sup>2</sup> makes also the same injunction for the embellishment of shrine doorway with figures of amorous couples. But it seems to allow even more space for the portrayal of the Mithunas as it prescribes that the door-jamb decoration, but for one-fourth of the lower portion occupied by the keeper figures, should be allotted to the Mithuna theme.

The *Varāṅgacarita*,<sup>3</sup> a Jaina epic of the seventh century, gives a detailed description of the Jina's shrine. According to it the carved bands on the doorway consisted of a miraculous creeper showing love scenes or amorous couples. Further, its pillars were decorated with the pot-and-foliage capitals, foliated scroll work, and Dampati figures. Such occurrence of the amorous couples on early temple pillars is to be noticed particularly at Ajanta (*Ills. 116, 117, 119*) and in the Western Cālukya temples at Badami and Aihole (*Ills. 123, 141*). The carved medallions on pillars, besides the bracket pieces, exhibit the male-female scenes in various loving situations mostly restrained.

There is, as even a casual visitor may notice, almost an ubiquitous presence of Mithuna and Dampati figures in the cave sculpture at Ajanta of the fifth to the seventh century AD. Both human and celestial couples, appearing in a variety of postures, as sitting, standing and flying, are to be seen in the carved and painted details of different parts and sections of the architecture, namely on doorways, pilasters, pillars, bracket-capitals, architraves, wall panels and ceilings (*Ills. 115-119*). For example, there we have in Cave XVII, the porch entrance showing over the door a painting of eight seated figures of the seven Mortal Buddhas and Maitreya and just underneath them, on the door lintel, a frieze of eight panels painted with seated figures of Mithuna or Dampati lovers (*Ill. 115*). Now much ruined façade of Cave I, the latest and finest of the works at Ajanta, provides 'the only instance here of a Vihāra decorated with sculpture' on the frontage. Even the extant sculptural ornamentation from it is sufficient to indicate the favour the Mithuna theme was accorded by the artist in the early seventh century for embellishing this Buddhist monastery (*Ill. 120*). The amorous figures are shown both on the

<sup>1</sup> *Bṛhatsamhitā*, 56. 14-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Agni Purāṇa*, 104.30.

<sup>3</sup> *Varāṅgacarita* of Jaṭānandin, ed. by A.N. Upadhye, Bombay, 1938, ch. XXII, verses 60 and 63.

pillar brackets and the pediment friezes. This fact is further confirmed as one enters the Vihāra; the hall doorway, pillars inside and the shrine portal itself exhibit elegant compositions of Mithuna figures.

Of the four rock-cut Brahmanical shrines at the Western Cālukya capital Badami, the earliest being dated by an inscription of 543-4 AD and another, of 578 AD, each illustrates a wealth of amorous scenes and couples side by side with imposing images of deities and other mythical depictions. They are seen not only in single compositions as occupying pillars, pillar-capitals, ceiling brackets and medallions, etc. (*Ills. 121-22, 124*), but also at times in running friezes of several panels embellishing the lintels. Closely allied to this group of cave-temples was the building activity at Aihole (*Ills. 123, 140, 141*). But a marked restraint both in style and expression of the Mithuna theme is the hallmark of early Cālukyan sculpture at two places. However, the change of architecture from the rock-cut to the structural now at Aihole called for a particular attention by the artist on the exterior of the building. Thus, in addition to the interior embellishment in the Durga Temple, for example, we have prominent sculptures of amatory couples carved on the colonnade of the cloister running round the entire building (*Ill. 123*). Besides normal human figures, sometimes there are met with imaginary forms (e.g. horse-headed fairy, centaur, Jalamānuṣa) in pairs and also animal and bird Mithunas. But this aspect of the motif found greater elaboration at Pattadakal which represents the seventh-eighth century activity of Cālukyan architecture (*Ill. 206*). Speaking of these late temples, O.C. Gangoly has observed that “the architects did not take the ‘mithuna’ to mean only human couples, but sexual pairs of all kinds of beings, so that it is remarkable to expect that loving couples of Apsaras, Gandharvas, lions, deers, elephants, serpents and other animals demanded illustrations.”<sup>1</sup>

According to the same authority, the two Mithuna groups flanking the famous Garuḍa relief near the ceiling of Cave III at Badami represent a significant iconography. They are to be identified as showing Mithuna Rāśi, the third sign of the zodiac (*Ill. 25*). In both the pairs the male figure carries a staff, and in the Indian astrological tradition, “the presiding deity of this ‘Rāśi’ is a pair composed of a male carrying a staff and a female carrying a Vīṇā.”<sup>2</sup> However, the female figure in both the above reliefs does not bear any attribute. The Mithuna as one of the twelve signs (*rāśis*) of the zodiac is essentially a symbol of man-and-woman, though its Western counterpart is known to be Gemini, “Twins”. At the earliest, the unmistakable portrayal of Mithuna Rāśi in Indian art is found on a fifth-century capital from Udaigiri which shows on its drum a masterly representation of the Twelve Rāśis and the Sun. But this graphically represented standing couple does not seem to be characterised as yet by any additional attributes (*Ill. 125*).

<sup>1</sup>O.C. Gangoly, ‘The Mithuna in Indian Art,’ *Rūpam*, nos. 22-23, 1925, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

The other architectural element on the exterior of the early temple building was its ground terrace or socle, which provided opportunity to the sculptor for showing pleasing series of embellishing forms and mythical legends (*Ills. 126, 127, 135*). For example, the best preserved temple basement showing a set of Mithuna figures is at Devagarh. In the Śiva temple at Bhumara also,<sup>1</sup> such panels formed decoration on the basement or the dado. In fact, another region employed by the artist quite early in the temple architecture for this theme was the lower mouldings on the superstructure. A characteristic example is provided by the recently discovered Gupta temple at Madhia (also called Deori Kalan) near Katni in Madhya Pradesh (*Ill. 128*). Similarly, in the famous Gupta temple of brick at Bhitargaon near Kanpur, several terracotta panels in the cornice friezes show amorous couples (*Ills. 129-32*).

Different positions in an early medieval temple showing amatory themes will be found to include the doorframes, horizontal mouldings on the socle, projections and recesses of the exterior walls, pillars in the Maṇḍapas, brackets and niched panels both inside and outside, and also many other unassuming nook and corners in the architectonic planning (*Ills. 133-35, 141*). The common purpose at the back of such portrayals is more or less decorative in the monumental design as a whole as should be in the case of any other motif of art and beauty. But it is indeed treated comparatively with some greater zest owing to the fact of its dramatic concomitance with the colourful behaviour of the sex life. There appear male and female in each other's company standing or sitting side by side in compromising postures of easy repose, conversing together, with hands intimately touching the body of each other, sometimes close together in mild embrace. Further on to the path of love making, they are sometimes making open erotic gestures revealing their desire to the partner, employing the techniques of persuasion, arousing her or his passion to an erotic rhythm by embrace or kiss. The male often figures as trying to woo or appease the bashful, annoyed or arrogant lady. Some of the scenes also represent the removal of the garment, unbinding of the girdle, full-fledged embrace and the sexual congress. Of the coital act there will be found only a few instances as compared to the number of restrained Mithuna representations. However, it is only later, under a new lease of life to the motif, that a fuller exposition of the coital theme or *Maithuna* was admitted to take over the naive Mithuna.

Several classes of demigods described in literature under the designations of Vidyādhara, Siddha, Gandharva and Yakṣa are frequently to appear in the exemplifying role of the Mithuna motif. But it is sometimes very difficult to define distinctive personalities of each of these celestial or supernatural beings

<sup>1</sup>R.D. Banerji, *The Temple of Śiva at Bhumara*, Calcutta, 1924, pl. IX, b; Pramod Chandra, *Stone Sculpture in the Allahabad Museum*, Poona, 1970, pl. LIX, 190-91.

in medieval iconography. The names usually represent more or less a conventionalised list of such subsidiary divinities who appear in attendance of the higher gods either close to their images or anywhere in their temples. They are, in their own dignity, treated also as dominant symbols of the idealised presence of the heavenly pleasures and amorous joys. Usually these figures have normal human appearance (*Ill. 136*) with no element of hybrid personality. Vidyādhari, Siddhāṅganā, Apsaras and Yakṣiṇī are the female names of their respective counterparts. In medieval iconography the Gandharva seems to have also evolved into a hybrid form with bird-like lower body and for this type his female is to be called Gandharvī and not Apsaras (*Ill. 139*). The Apsaras, however, is a common designation of those beautiful women who appear on the medieval monuments in various dramatic and bewitching poses. Similarly the name Yakṣī or Yakṣiṇī is also loosely taken to define a female beauty, both in early as well as medieval art.

Besides the normal human couples, several other types of Mithuna motif were admitted quite early in the artistic tradition and kindred beliefs. Thus we have the Mithuna of such semi-human celestials or genii who have hybrid or composite body (*Ills. 137-41*). But in mythology their character is of the tutelary divinities of a lower status and mostly they are found to render secondary duties only. However, one dominant aspect of their behaviour is to move in Mithuna pairs. Both in art and literature their life is often represented as exemplary of amorous rejoicing and merriment. In their own dignity they are known to enjoy Mithuna pleasures in a rocky solitude, under a cosy tree, or any such resort of natural beauty. All wondrous climes and heavenly regions, known in conventionalised mythical tradition, are essentially inhabited by them in their Mithuna aspect.

One class of them is represented by a horse-bodied (*Ill. 137*) or horse-faced female fairy (*Ill. 138*). But she is of a dangerous kind and her role is often described to attract and catch men with the snares of her beauty, music, smell, flavour and love. Having enjoyed the union with a man she was believed to devour him.<sup>1</sup> The Mithuna of this Assamukhī Yakṣiṇī in company of a human prey appears in the early carvings. The horse-bodied form shows a female human bust on an equine body. In such representations the human lover appears as riding on her horseback and making amorous gestures. Counterpart to this Yakṣiṇī, there is also a horse-bodied male being, similarly carrying away on his back a human beloved.

The Mithuna proper of centaur-like Kinnaras and Kinnaris shows them usually as hovering in the sky and having equine legs only. Sometimes they appear staying in the sky in the attitude of paying their homage to the Stūpa,

<sup>1</sup> Assamukhī Yakhī, in Jātaka no. 432 (*Jātaka*, III, p. 502). But see *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, III. 42. 13-14, according to which this type also is confounded with the Kinnara class : "The Kinnaras are said to be of two types, one having human face with horse's body and the other, human body with horse's face."

the sacred tree, or the deity-image. Otherwise in their own dignity the figures of Kinnara couples are portrayed in decorative sculpture on the walls, ceilings and other positions of the temple. Their form in medieval iconography is sometimes different and as described by the *Mānasāra*, they have animal legs, human trunk and faces resembling that of the Garuḍa having winged arms.<sup>1</sup> Allied to them in physical appearance is the hybrid form of the Gandharvas who appear mostly with a musical instrument that suggests their character (*Ill.* 139). Despite a variation in iconography, with this class of beings are usually confounded such other celestial creatures that often have wings, siren-like lower body of a bird (sometimes), or some other monstrous composition with human limbs.

One outstanding form is the Jala-mānuṣa-mithuna,<sup>2</sup> in which the human body below waist is conceived of as dissolved into an exuberant wave pattern (*Ills.* 140, 141). Their Mithuna figures in various compositions are an asset of the decorative element in medieval temples.

To this same family of hybrid beings belong the Nāga or serpent angels, frequently shown in human form but with snake-hoods crowning their human head (*Ills.* 116, 144), or having ophidian lower body. Their Mithuna figures locked in close embrace are treated with particular interest on the walls of the Konark temple. Sometimes we also find an embracing Nāga couple in serpentine form.

This last form indicates that the Mithuna motif was not restricted to the couples of human and semi-human figures only. The artist sometimes took interest in showing pairs or couples of serpent, animal and bird forms also<sup>3</sup> (*Ills.* 22, 23, 142, 143). It is presumably of this nature that we find the depiction of monkey figures engaged in love making in the temple sculpture of Orissa, particularly in Konark (*Ill.* 224). That the motif of "monkey family" was treated earlier so intimately and already perfected by the masters of the eastern Deccan is evident from its portrayal at Nagarajunakonda<sup>4</sup> and in the Pallava art (*Ill.* 143).

As early as the reliefs at Bharhut and Sanchi (2nd century BC), we have animal and bird pairs shown, along with the human Mithuna, with an unmistakable bearing on the fertility and auspicious significance of the motif (*Ills.* 96, 98, 101). In Bharhut sculpture there are a few pleasing designs showing the

<sup>1</sup>*Mānasāra*, 58. 20-24. The hybrid character of Kinnara's bodily form is mentioned as early as the Bhallaṭīya Jātaka, no. 504. A Mithuna of Kinnara and Kinnarī lived at the Gandhamādana hill and the motif of the story is that they lamented throughout their life their separation for one night from each other.

<sup>2</sup>*Vāsavadattā*, ed. by Jivanand vidyaoagare, Calcutta, 1933, p. 127; *Tilakamañjarī*, Bombay, 1938, p. 146.

<sup>3</sup>For example, see motifs of bird-mithuna, *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, III. 33.18; swan-mithuna, *Kādambarī*, p. 9; fish-mithuna, monkey-mithuna, elephant-mithuna, *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra*, XXXI. 126. 134; bird and animal Mithunas, *Tilakamañjarī*, p. 364.

<sup>4</sup>See *Mārg*, *Nagarjunakonda Sculptures*, March 1965, p. 55, fig. 28.

Vase of Plenty, covered with luxuriant lotus wealth issuing out of its mouth. A pair or two of birds are to be seen perched on the blown up lotus-flowers loving each other by joining their bills (*Ill.* 22). Further reference to the motif can be made in the early Kuṣāṇa art at Mathura. For example, we find a pair of swans poised on the central flower in the lotus creeper carving on the back side of the well-known statue of “breast-pressing” Lakṣmī standing on a Full Vase (*Ill.* 23). One outstanding symbol of this category, to gain a particular merit in the tradition, is the pair of fishes, called Mina-mithuna or Matsya-yugala (*Ill.* 145.), reckoned as one in the standardised list of Eight Auspicious Symbols. Every student of Indian art will appreciate the fact that such instances of animal and bird Mithunas can be multiplied to great numbers as appearing in various compositions throughout the artistic tradition.

## Chapter Six

# THE INCOMPLETE MITHUNA

The Mithuna concept is transformed into the Dampati to answer the need of social regulations of human life, and to civilise, so to say, the elemental instinct of Kāma. The unbridled pursuit of Kāma is regarded asocial and against the codes of sexual morals that came to prevail upon the human society. But it is not always that man behaves in tune with imposed patterns of behaviour. There come up many instances in which the Mithuna is never complete, is ill complete, or is just aberrant. May in actual life such 'incomplete' Mithunas suffer pangs of separation from the beloved, and the unsatisfied love tear the mind and heart of their psychic personality. But in art and its symbolical expression this need not, however, be so.

It is the dualism of the male and the female that constitute the Mithuna nature. They are the universal male and the universal female complementary to each other; accordingly, the presence of the *one* suggests the corresponding presence of the other, for each of them alone is 'incomplete' and represents only a half or a fragment of the complete Mithuna. Every individual remains an 'incomplete' Mithuna ever in search of the complementary half since on sexual plane Nature allows only a momentary completion which fleets away elusively from one's reach again and again. It is with reference to the transcendental Eros that the man is ever after the flashy amours of the transcendental Woman. In the main the sexual instinct is female-focussed. Thus, the female element finds symbolically an illustrious multiform to accord with the male's languid desires in sexual sphere. The Mithuna in its incomplete or complementary aspect is mostly represented as the Alluring Femininity in Her countless images of libidinous self-display.

The charming figures of the so-called Yakṣis, or Dryads and Nymphs, appearing in early Indian sculpture represent, in fact, a relieving aspect or cross-section of the hieroglyphic Mithuna. These figures bear witness to the dynamic understanding by the Indian artist of female body-form in all its ideal



of abundance and sensitive modulations. Moreover, there is realised in stone some astounding stir of emotions born from the desire to meet the lover. This transfigures in various dramatic and voluptuous poses which give a lasting definition to their portrayal on the religious edifice. They stand as symbols of the erotic anticipation and appear to celebrate the transient variation in Kāma's dominion. In the realm of Kāma they indeed play the rôles of expectant damsels busy in their absorbing pastimes. The male counterpart is not altogether missing; he will be found nearby or under their feet as symbolically present in a guise or cover of insignificance. For example,

- I. The dominant female stands trampling a couchant dwarf or a diminutive male.
- II. The dominant female stands trampling an elephant figure, emblematic of the male motif. The animal sometimes holds a tree in his trunk suggesting obvious erotic gestures (*Ill. 147*).
- III. The dominant female stands trampling a crocodile, the well-known emblem of the Love god. A crocodile symbolised also the fecundative energy and fire of the male (*Ill. 146*).
- IV. The dominant female stands trampling a fish-tailed horse. A horse symbolises excessive male virility (*Ill. 149*).
- V. The maiden in embrace with a tree, which symbolises the male counterpart (*Ill. 148*).
- VI. The maiden exposing her beauty by pulling down the ends of her scarf.

The above representations mostly refer to the Yakṣi figures on the Bharhut, Sanchi and Mathura railings of the second-first century BC. At Bharhut they are mentioned by their individual names in the inscribed labels. But an extension of this motif in the art at Sanchi and Mathura shows them to be defined subsequently not as individual Yakṣi images but several types of the representational theme known by the Yakṣi, Sālabhañjikā, Vṛkṣakā, Apsaras, or such other class designations (*Ills. 146, 150 ff.*).

In a Jaina canonical text, the lovely females occurring on religious monuments are graphically narrated with respect to their true erotic attraction, without, however, involving any point of false apology for its deemed heretical outlook. "The Sālabhañjikā women, represented (on railing pillars) on either side of the doors, were standing in graceful poses, well-supported (on couching figures), beautifully ornamented, wearing variegated garments, painted in shades of red and necklaces of various designs, slender-waisted, having round prominent breasts, eyes with red corners, and black curly hair adorned with auspicious marks, resting against excellent Aśoka trees, holding the distended boughs with their left hand, stealing the hearts of the gods as it were with their piercing askances . . . . They were dazzling as if like meteors, resembled

the lightning, or a pencil of rays, and were excelling in brightness even the light of the sun. They were charmingly and amorously dressed and were beautiful, splendid and most pleasing in appearance."<sup>1</sup>

Literally the word *Sālabhañjikā* signifies a woman engaged in the act of plucking flowers of a *sāla* (*Vatica Robusta*) tree (*Ill.* 160). But it came to denote generally the motif of a female figure standing against a tree, grasping, or in part embrace of its distended branch or foliage<sup>2</sup> (*Ills.* 146-151). The association with the tree also came subsequently to be shown only suggestively and the damsel now became free to act in accordance with any of her choice pastimes or amorous gesticulations. Thus, we have a great elaboration of the *Sālabhañjikā* or *Vṛkṣakā* (from *vṛkṣa* meaning tree) theme on the railing pillars at Mathura in the 1st—2nd century AD. In addition to the types of female portrayal already seen in the Śuṅga sculpture, the following are to be enlisted here :

- VII. The maiden playing with a parrot, the favourite bird and vehicle of the Love god Kāmadeva. There are several variant renderings of the theme. One shows the parrot (symbolic of the lover) seated on the lady's girdle, nibbling at its knot to unbind it (*Ill.* 155). Another shows the bird seated on the lady's shoulder and biting with its bill at her ear-pendant, or, as in another relief, her forehead-pendant.
- VIII. The maiden with a Hamsa bird (*Ill.* 154). The girl after her bath is wringing out water from her locks and the drops are being swallowed by the bird below (representing the lover drinking potions of love).
- IX. The maiden kicking with her left foot the Aśoka tree, symbolic of the male partner (*Ill.* 158).
- X. The maiden showing a lotus stalk.
- XI. The maiden brandishing a sword. The sword apparently symbolises the sharp-cutting edge of love (*Ills.* 158, 161).
- XII. The maiden showing a lamp.
- XIII. The maiden playing with a ball. She is shown in the attitude of throwing it, thus exposing her bodily charm and desire.
- XIV. The maiden in dance ecstasy or trance of love (*Ill.* 155).
- XV. The maiden playing on a harp with shell-plectrum.
- XVI. The maiden inviting by drinking from a cup (*Ill.* 156).

<sup>1</sup>*Rāyapaseṇiyasutta*, N.V. Vaidya edn., Poona, 1938, *sūtra* 27, p. 134; see Agrawala, *Indian Art*, p. 224, who quotes and comments on it.

<sup>2</sup>J. Ph. Vogel, 'The Woman-and-tree or *Sālabhañjikā* in Indian Literature and Art,' *Acta Orientalia*, VII, pp. 201-31; Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, New Delhi, 1979, pp. 32 ff.; Agrawala, *Indian Art*, pp. 224-29; P.K. Agrawala, *Mathura Railing Pillars*, Varanasi, 1966.

- XVII. The maiden bearing wine-container. In one example, she carries in addition a branch of mango blossoms that symbolises the spring season (*Ill. 157*).
- XVIII. The maiden revealing her ardent desire by shaking with hand her necklace about the breasts.
- XIX. The maiden taking her bath in the nude under a waterfall (*Ill. 158*).
- XX. The maiden pressing the breast with her own hand.
- XXI. The maiden enamoured by her reflection in the mirror. She gets conscious of her own charms, the reflection reminding at once the partner.
- XXII. The maiden unloosing her girdle.
- XXIII. The maiden taking leave of her undergarment.
- XXIV. The maiden doing her make-up. (i) Coiffure, (ii) ornamentation (*Ill. 178*).
- XXV. The maiden fondling a child (*Ill. 158*).
- XXVI. The idle maiden (*Ill. 159*).

However, these enticing figures were not an isolated phenomenon of the art of a particular period. They seem to have a tradition well defined both in its artistic pertinence and religious or auspicious spontaneity. A Jātaka story<sup>1</sup> brings out the motif of thirtyseven Divine Maidens (*deva-dhītā*), who in the heavenly car, attended the musical performance of musician teacher Guttila, unrivalled expert of Vīṇā. Earlier in the same story they are said to have been present at Guttila's music on the earth by appearing in three groups of three thousand each. They belonged to the celestial clan of Apsaras maidens who numbered in thousands. They are elsewhere said to be no less than sixteen thousand in number.<sup>2</sup> This same myth of multiple Apsaras or Divine Maidens is represented in the Māra legend of the Buddhist canon. They are the Daughters of Māra, the genius of passion, who transform themselves into hundred-and-one alluring forms.<sup>3</sup>

The daughters of Māra are graphically described to appear with their countless amorous challenges and gestures in their unsuccessful rôle they had to play in assailing Gautama before his enlightenment. Thus the *Lalitavistara* (canto XXI; 2nd century AD), Sanskrit life-story of Buddha, enumerates their thirtytwo representative gesticulations and attitudes of allurements. This motif of enticing Divine Damsels seems to have been further elaborated and con-

<sup>1</sup>Guttila Jātaka, no. 243 (*Jātaka*, II, pp. 248-57).

<sup>2</sup>*Jātaka*, V, p. 2; a troupe of heavenly Apsarasas is mentioned, V, p. 254; 25 million dancing girls in Śakra's heaven, I, p. 206. Cp. the motif of sixteen thousand royal danseuses, I, p. 437.

<sup>3</sup>*Samyukta Nikāya*, IV. 3.5.

ventionalised both in art and literature under several types and by a defining nomenclature.

An allied tradition is that of the Eight (or more) Auspicious Maidens. The *Rāmāyaṇa* mentions such eight or sixteen beautiful maidens who were required to be present on a royal coronation or similar festive occasion.<sup>1</sup> The *Lalitavistara* also describes them (each in group of five thousand) as heralding the ceremonial procession in the after-birth festivities of Siddhārtha.<sup>2</sup> The same are enumerated in detail under the name of the Auspicious Maidens or Apsarasas in the *Varāṅgacarita* and the *Kuvalayamālā* as gracing by their presence the worship of the Jina.<sup>3</sup>

A literary variation of this motif is seen in the belief of the Eight Devakumārikās (Divine Maidens), one list of eight for each of the four directions, thus in all reckoning thirtytwo in number. (*Ills.* 162, 177). According to the Ceylonese chronicle *Mahāvamsa*<sup>4</sup>, 'the Thirtytwo Maidens of Space' was also a theme along with other auspicious and decorative motifs that were to be shown in the carving of the Stūpa.<sup>5</sup>

From the historical viewpoint, the theme of such 'incomplete' Mithuna will be found persisting through centuries in the religious art and tradition of the country. Initially we have it cherished on the Stūpa railings of the Buddhist and the Jaina. Sometimes the damsel figures are seen flanking the Buddha or his symbol (*Ills.* 152, 153). Later on they came to occupy the walls of temples. It is just by way of a change in the architectural style. When the railing went out of fashion in the Gupta period, and its structural concept came to be merged into the plinth of the temple, the female figures that had a strong hold on the mind of the people were architectonically transferred to the door-jambes and Maṇḍapa pillars of the buildings and shrines in which positions they are described by the classical poets like Kālidāsa, Subandhu and Bāṇa.<sup>6</sup> In the dedicatory inscription itself of Cave XVI at Ajanta the building is stated as "having been embellished in (architectural details of) the window-projections and the balustrade in beautiful galleries with statues of Indra's maidens or celestial nymphs."

Soon the motif is found expanded to the exterior walls of the temple, the lower portions of its superstructure, the pillars and the ceilings of the accessory chambers and halls, etc. (*Ills.* 11, 164-78). In these positions their

<sup>1</sup>*Rāmāyaṇa*, Baroda critical edn., Kiṣkindhā, 25.25; Ayodhyā, appendix 10.25; Sundara., Vulgate edn., 18. 11-14.

<sup>2</sup>*Lalitavistara*, canto VII.

<sup>3</sup>*Varāṅgacarita*, XXIII. 38-39; *Kuvalayamālā*, ed. by A.N. Upadhye, Bombay, 1959, p. 93.

<sup>4</sup>*Lalitavistara*, canto XXIV; *Mahāvamsa*, XXX. 89.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* Cf. 'kumārikā' figures to be shown on Indra's Pole, *Bṛhatsamhitā*, XLIII, 58; also 'nāṭya-kumārī', dramatic maidens, in *Nāṭyaśāstra*, III. 8.

<sup>6</sup>*Raghuvamśa*, XVI. 17; *Harṣacarita*, pp. 70, 125, 127, 201; *Kādambarī*, p. 17; *Vāsavadattā*, ed. by L.H. Gray, New York, 1913, p. 160. Earlier, *Nāṭyaśāstra*, II. 83 and 101.

portrayal is recommended in the architectural treatises of the medieval period with a full-fledged nomenclature denoting their types and postures.<sup>1</sup> There may be seen a great variation in their names but a critical survey reveals them to be mere conventional terms prevalent in different centres of the medieval temple architecture, and more or less describing a common set of representations handed down from the earlier tradition. There are the following terms to be met with in the texts and several local architectural terminologies for the class or generic designation of these female figures: Apsaras, heavenly nymphs; Deva-rāmā, celestial women; Deva-aṅganā, heavenly women; Deva-kanyā, celestial maidens; Sura-sundarī, heavenly beauties; Madanikā, impassioning females; Alasā, Alasa-kanyā, indolent maidens; Prekṣaṇikā, women in dramatic poses; Nartakī, dancing women; Aṣṭa-kanyā, eight maidens; Aṣṭa-sakhī, eight friendly maidens; Kanyā, maiden.<sup>2</sup>

The poet Dhanapāla, in his prose romance *Tilakamañjarī* (early 11th century) describes a Jaina shrine in fascinating details of its architectural and sculptural glory, evidently the narration inspired from the contemporary monuments. According to his imagery, the Sālabhañjikā women carved out of precious stones embellished the upper portions of the pillars and they appeared as if the celestial damsels themselves had come down from heaven to witness the excelling work of sculpture and architecture.<sup>3</sup> In the *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra* by Dhanapāla's patron the Paramāra emperor Bhoja, the depiction of Sālabhañjikā figures on pillar brackets is mentioned as a regular feature in architecture. But this architectural treatise, written by (or under) the most renowned figure for cultural glory in the medieval Hindu period, also gives specific details of such embellishing figures on the body of the temple type called Meru-prāsāda, which was regarded as the best and most exalted of all temple styles. The female figures stationed on the walls and the superstructure in a perfected architectonic diagram of horizontal and vertical sequence are defined under the several names of Vidyādhara-vadhū (women of Vidyādharas), Sura-sundarī (celestial beauties), nymphs and serpent maidens.<sup>4</sup>

According to the *Śilpa Prakāśa*, a late medieval text of Orissa on temple architecture, the theme (of sixteen types) of Alasa-kanyā, "Indolent Maidens" otherwise technically designated in local terminology as Nārī-bandha or Kanyā-bandha, i.e. woman or maiden fascia, is indispensable in architecture. "As a

<sup>1</sup>*Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra*, Baroda, 1966, pp. 384, 441, 541, 542 (*sālabhañji*, *sālabhañjikā*), 404 (*surasundarī*), 404 (*apsarasas*), 384 (temple is said to be replete with Apsaras hosts), 363 (*vidyādhari*); *Aparājitaprecchā*, Baroda, 1950, pp. 192 (*sālabhañjī*), 489 (enjoins the depiction of 8, 12, 24, 32 or 64 *Varāṅganās*, "choice damsels", on the cupola or *vitāna* of Maṇḍapas). Also see *Mayamata*, XVIII. 6, and *Prāśādamaṇḍana*, VII. 31-34 for dancing females on cupola.

<sup>2</sup>Eight, sixteen, twentyfour, thirtytwo or more are the conventionalised numbers variously used in the Śilpa texts as to elaborate the Apsaras or Divine Maiden motif for representational purposes.

<sup>3</sup>*Tilakamañjarī*, p. 154.

<sup>4</sup>*Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra*, ch. 57, p. 404.

house without women the monument becomes of inferior kind and fruitless.... Contemplated in various postures, the woman is known as Alasā, Indolent, and is employed to embellish the oriel windows, the spire, the walls and other parts of the front-halls.” The text enumerates in detail sixteen forms of these maidens with their specific names and pleasing functions on various positions in architectural planning. By their beautiful forms and graceful postures they are said to enrapture men and also demigods such as the Gandharvas, Yakṣas, Serpents and Kinnaras.<sup>1</sup>

On the basis of the traditional Indian interpretation of a profound comparison between a Tantric Yantra, ‘diagram’, and a temple building, Stella Kramrisch has made the following remark in her study on the Hindu temple: “In plan, the fretted outline of the buttressed fort, of the temple, is akin to a yantra or linear diagram used by the worshipper for a localisation of each of the aspects and powers of God in their hierarchy with regard to the Centre, the immovable Principle . . . . The Śaktis or Yoginīs are working energies subservient to the Great Śakti. On the walls of the temples they are figured in all directions as Celestial Beauties. . . . The Attractions in the outer circle of the yantra, the Celestial Beauties on the walls of the temple, serve man, the devotee; they satisfy his response to them so that, increased in power, released from their attractions and transformed, he proceeds in his devotion towards God in the innermost sanctuary of his heart and in the temple.”<sup>2</sup>

About the position of the Apsaras figures on the temple walls and also its implied fulfilment she has further observed: “The Celestial Beauties belong to the Āvaraṇadevatās, “surrounding divinities.” Their number is large. Their figures are repeated on the temples, all round the walls, to either side of each god, and as on the Kandariya and Devi Jagadamba Temples, in all the three belts of sculpture. Such supererogation in carving their figures, alike in type yet indefinitely modified in each instance by a particular rhythmical consistency, shows repetition itself as a power in whose comprehensive rhythm are interwoven the images in rows and storeys. It is made concrete by art in the figures of the gods and the celestial women, who, though they resemble the human shape, are unlike it.”<sup>3</sup>

A belief in celestial beauties and their presence in the world beyond, ever aspired for by human beings, has an age-old footing and is in fact traceable to the Upaniṣadic texts. Thus we have it recorded in the *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad*: “He who proceeds on the path leading-to-the-gods in succession the world of Agni, of Vāyu, of Varuṇa, of Indra, and of Prajāpati reaches the world of Brahman. . . . Him there approach five hundred Apsarasas, one hundred with powdered aromatics in their hand, one hundred with vestments, one hundred with fruits, one hundred with ointments, and one hundred with garlands in

<sup>1</sup>*Śilpa Prakāśa*, ed. by Alice Boner and S.R. Sarma. I. Leiden, 1966, 391-481.

<sup>2</sup>Stella Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple*, II, Calcutta, 1946, pp. 338-39.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 339.

their hand. They adorn him with the ornaments of Brahman. Thus adorned with Brahman's ornaments, he, the knower of Brahman, goes to Brahman."<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to find in this text a detailed account of the Brahma-world. Particularly important is the description of the Abode or Shrine of Aparājita, "Unconquered", with the two door-keepers Indra and Prajāpati, the hall 'Extensive', the throne 'Far-reaching', the couch 'Of Unmeasured Splendour,' the beloved 'Mental,' and her counterpart 'Visual,' both of whom taking flowers verily weave the worlds, and the Apsarasas, the Mothers, the Nurses and the Dancers.<sup>2</sup> However, it runs like an idealised image or model of a full-fledged temple building enshrining the holystead, flanked by his world-creating mental and visual Śaktis (Energies) and provided with a portal with keepers, an extensive hall or Maṇḍapa (pavilion) and the figures of divine nymphs, mothers etc. (on its wall surface). A likely parallelism may be suggested between this picture and the medieval temple as revealing the architectonic composition of a Hindu temple in its essential metaphysical conception and afflatus.

According to the traditional concept, the shrine or abode of the god (*deva-prāsāda*) was based for its architectural planning on the model of royal palaces (*rāja-prāsāda*); both of these building types on the earth were to derive their design from the celestial mansions (*prāsāda*), known only to man's imagination. Thus, it is pertinent again to draw an analogy between a description of Apsarasas in the Vaijayanta-prāsāda of Śakra-Indra, the king of gods, as given in the *Majjhima Nikāya*<sup>3</sup> (Ils. 51, 52, 163), and the motif of female figures stationed on the early Stūpa railings, or on the walls of a medieval temple. According to this Pali scripture, the Vaijayanta palace consisted in each of its storeys (*āsanas*) of hundred balconies (*niryūhas*), each of the balconies having seven hundred roofed pavilions (*kūtāgāras*), of which each was inhabited by seven celestial beauties (Apsarasas), each in turn attended by seven maidens.

Thus we may also understand that the portrayal of female beauties on the exterior of religious monument was considered to be an important element in its entire planning. It is on the heavenly model of the God's abode that the temple is made on the earth. Throughout the tradition the imagery of heavenly rewards and joys is found characterised by the presence of Apsarases and celestial beauties in the world beyond attained by men of virtue. Indeed, the mortal aiming at emancipating himself from worldly snares can hardly forget the alluring passions. For the factors that bind him in this world necessarily come to him in the bountiful stage of permanence in the other world. The

<sup>1</sup> *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad*, I. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. See translation by Hume, p. 304. In place of 'ambayā nadyaḥ', we prefer 'ambayā naṭyaḥ' as suggested by Belvalkar and Ranade, *History of Indian Philosophy*, II, Poona, 1927, p. 273.

<sup>3</sup> *Majjhima Nikāya*, I. 4.7 (=Sutta 37).

allurements of religion in the higher world are to offer a better bargain than one may have in the present world of lower pleasures. It is like the great teacher Buddha himself showing the celestial beauties to his brother Nanda so as to emphasise the gradation in the realm of unsatiable desires.

“And Nanda beheld the grove of Indra on all sides with eyes staring with surprise; and Apsarasas, full of joy and eyeing each other haughtily, came round him.” “They were ever young, ever busied in love alone and enjoyed jointly by those who have earned merit; celestial beings, union with them was no sin. In them centred the reward of austerities of the divine world.”<sup>1</sup>

The poor fellow whose mind was seized by the vision of divine females shown by the Lord through his miraculous power is ready at once to follow the path of austerities having now his goal to attain those inmates of heaven in preference to his wife and worldly women. The Lord indicated to Nanda : “If you desire these women, practise strenuous austerities in this life in order to pay the fee for them. . . . Therefore if you desire to obtain the Apsarasas, abide diligently and zealously in the observances, and I stand surety that, should you hold firmly to your vow, union with them will certainly be yours.”<sup>2</sup> Similar didactic rôle to be played by the enchanting Apsaras figures represented as occupying the walls of the temple (*Ills. 166-76, etc.*), may be regarded to have been of some practical import for those for whom they were depicted.

A further exemplification of the ‘incomplete’ Mithuna is to be witnessed in Rajput miniature paintings. Apart from the full expression of Śṛṅgāra, Love-sentiment, in the cycles of Kṛṣṇa legends, the union of Śiva and Pārvati, the Tantric subjects, the erotic motifs of heroes and heroines (*Ills. 179-80, 198-99*), scenes from the epics and romantic poems and folk ballads, an exceptionally subtle representation of the ethos of Nāyikā or Love-woman will be found in the Rāgamālā (Garland of Musical Modes) paintings (*Ills. 183-197*). The Rāgamālā series of the Rajasthani, Mughal and Pahari schools are in fact to present ‘hieroglyphs’ of the melodies, Rāgas and Rāginīs, which are all derived in each case from a lyrical background, and are conceived as pictorial renderings of some specific mood or state of mind that is linked with, or situated in, the emotional environment of a particular musical mode or Rāga. The Rāgas are male and in main six in number, corresponding to the order of six seasons. Each Rāga has six ‘wives’, the Rāginīs, thirtysix in all. Their probable origin, as the various names indicate, lies in the age-old folk traditions of the Indian music; the names may refer sometimes to a geographical prevalence (e.g. Tōḍī; from Tōḍī = Tamil country), or a mythical background (e.g. Bhairavī, the spouse of Bhairava-Śiva).

However, pictorial representation of the male Rāgas brings out the motif of Mithuna in union (*Ills. 192-95*), while that of the Rāginīs or female melodies, of Mithuna in separation and ‘anticipation’ (*Ills. 183-91*). Most of

<sup>1</sup>Johnston, *The Saundarananda*, X. 35-36.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., X. 63.





the Rāginī pictures are based on the 'incomplete' Mithuna motif. The Nāyikā, heroine, is often a maiden in her sudden psychic awareness of the charms of adolescent youth, anticipating, in her various moods and gestures, the union with lover. Usually she is depicted alone, that is without her male companion, in her particular state of mind, with the material world and the natural surroundings treated 'as a mirror of the mood.'

As has been observed by V.S. Agrawala, "The Todi ragini takes its name from South India (ancient Tondi). Its pictorial representation is usually of a charming woman playing the vina, an instrument characteristic of the South, which attracts bright-coloured deer. The imagery is quite transparent, showing a maiden whose blossoming youth has just begun to inspire love in the hearts of young lovers who cluster around her. Similarly, Khambavati worshipping Brahma illustrates the old idea of the Creator falling in love with bewitching beauty of his own creation. Kakubha typifies the heroine in whom the pangs of love are awakened by a vision of her own beauty in a mirror. Malkaus represents lovers in dalliance. Desakh shows the heroine passionately embracing a post, that is, the lover. The first favourite among the rāginī, Bhairavi, depicts the unmarried heroine, who, like Pārvatī, enchanted by the vision of union with her lover, is absorbed in worshipping him."<sup>1</sup>

Quite early in the medieval Indian poetry eight classes of heroines or Nāyikā had come to be typified (*Ills. 181, 182*). This theme which poets described with subtle fancy and artists illustrated with equal fascination treats women as engaged in various situations of love-affairs. The lady who is often waiting for her lover at the trysting place forms a study of expectation, loneliness or frustration. This poetic convention seems to be precursor of such Rāginī paintings that show a lonely woman and apparently has its root in the earlier art tradition of the 'incomplete' Mithuna.

A good deal of imaginative variation and sometimes diverse influences of local traditions are to be noticed in the Rāgamālā iconographies, for it was a theme pictured by each artist according to one's stylistic nuances, contemporary poetic elaboration of certain motifs and representational elements involved and, above all, one's personal fascination and skill. But there are quite a few Rāgas and Rāginīs which show throughout a remarkable consistency in their pictorial rendering and perhaps the 'original' or initially set conventions of such paintings. The following main Rāgas and Rāginīs had more or less specific features of their visual image.

<sup>1</sup>V.S. Agrawala, *The Heritage of Indian Art*, New Delhi, 1964, p. 34. Apart from their pictorial merit, the Rāga-Rāginī miniatures would appear just absurd as to their queer names and purport unless we attempt to arrive at a full fledged analysis of their themes, motifs and names from the approach that is indicated by this scholar. A great help is to come from the inscriptions that frequently occur on the paintings themselves. Also see Coomaraswamy, 'Hindi Rāgamālā Texts', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 43, pp. 396-409; E. Waldschmidt, 'A Contribution to Rāgamālā Iconography,' *Munshi Indological Felicitation Volume*, Bombay, 1963, pp. 278-302.

The Rāginī Bhairavī (*Ill. 185*) shows a maiden worshipping Śiva-linga to win her lover.

The Rāginī Khambāvati shows a maiden engaged in propitiating an image of four-faced Brahmā to win over her lover. This name for local melody of coastal Gujarat was given after Khambāt or Cambay while the imagery of Brahmā's worship was derived from the singular fact of a renowned temple dedicated to this god at Khedbrahma.<sup>1</sup>

The Rāginī Āsāvārī (*Ill. 184*) is personified by a lonely maiden in a forest enchanting serpents through the Śabara *sādhanā* or mystic realisation followed by the autochthonous tribe Śabara. This being a pictorial visualisation of the melody taken from the Śabara people, as the name Āsāvārī itself reveals, she in fact represents a desolate Śabara woman attempting to attract her indifferent lover by occult magic. The Rāginī Bangāla (*Ill. 190*) was apparently a folk melody from Bengal, and thus typified as a lady forsaken by her husband, who left home as a captivated follower of some mystic Nātha Siddha or Nātha Yogī whose religious sect during medieval times had become a great force in eastern India and virtually ruined happy life of many women by taking their husbands as disciples. The woman's anxiety for her lover's whereabouts and welfare is the main theme variously handled by the artist in several stylistic traditions. A captive leopard or Bengal tiger is often used as the symbol indicating Bengal.

The Toḍī Rāginī (*Ill. 183*) is shown as a maiden in a meadow or forest playing lute among deer.

The Rāginī Lalita shows a sleeping lady having a dream of the lover approaching or leaving the pleasure-bed.

The Rāginī Kāmoda (*Ill. 187*) is depicted by a maiden in a meadow or forest counting the beads on a rosary in expectation of the fulfilment of her longing.

The Rāginī Bilāvala is conceived of as a maiden engaged in embellishing her body.

The Rāginī Kakubha (*Ill. 186*) shows a maiden in a meadow or forest with peacocks.

The Rāginī Desākha is seen as a maiden doing athletic exercise on the wrestler's post or 'mulkham' to quell her fervent passion.

In the painting illustrated here, the Rāginī Rāmakalī (*Ill. 188*), the name being derived from a hillock called Rāmagiri (mod. Ramtek near Nagpur) in Berar, shows a woman seated in her chamber taking 'pan' as she awaits the lover.

<sup>1</sup>During medieval times the temple cult of Brāhma had become almost extinct and only a few centres of his worship are known, the other famous one being Pushkar, near Ajmer, Rajasthan. For the picture of Rāginī Khambāvati, see Klaus Ebeling, *Ragamala Painting*, New Delhi, 1973, colour pl. 12. The Rāga-Rāginī miniatures will be found profusely illustrated and discussed in this work.

Similarly, the Rāginī Tailaṅgī (*Ill. 189*), called after Telingana or the region in Andhra between the rivers Godavari and Krishna is depicted by a lonely damsel with a torch in the midnight awaiting the lover on the bank of a rivulet.

The Mālakosa is usually represented as a prince taking 'pān' (but in later iconographic variation he is shown as smelling a flower as in *Ill. 195*). Sometimes his beloved is shown accompanying him on the same seat. It appears that the betel-leaf eating was considered to be characteristic fashion of the people of Malwa and Berar, and hence the name Mālava-Kaiśika or Mālava-Kauśika,<sup>1</sup> for a melody from this region and its personification.

The Rāga Bhairava is personified as the god Śiva with Pārvatī.

The Rāga Śrī (*Ill. 194*) being dedicated to Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning and music, whose festival held in January or February is famous as Śrī-pañcamī, is typified by a seated couple, but sometimes only the male partner, listening to music, one of the musicians often being a horse-faced figure of Tumburu, the celestial exponent of Viṇā.

The Rāgas Hṛṇḍala (*Ill. 192*) and Dipaka (*Ill. 193*) were apparently derived from the popular melodies of two seasonal festivals of northern India, namely the Swing, corresponding to or immediately following Holi in the spring season, and the Lamp-light festival or Dīpāvalī in the autumn. The Megha Rāga appears as a personification of the Rainy season. Each of them shows often a joyous couple or men and women absorbed in typical mood of the particular occasion.

In one of the earliest sets of Rāgamālā series of fortytwo paintings from Western India (end of the 15th century AD),<sup>2</sup> there seems to have been adopted a simple and distinct pictorial formula. Each of the six male Rāgas is represented by the seated figure of a god while the thirtysix Rāginis are conceived of as standing maidens characterised by a variety of gestures and attributes. However, in the late series of Rāgamālās, the artists appear to have interpreted afresh the underlying motif of the incomplete Mithuna, now representing it not merely by a lonely woman, but sometimes also by a lovesick male youth (*Ill. 196*) turned ascetic in penance desiring union with the beloved. A simplified yet extravagant handling of this theme of a male lover apparently gave rise to the iconographies of a list of Rāgaputras (*Ill. 197*), Sons of Rāgas, which mostly use a prince or youthful gentleman shown as seated, or equestrian, or in some other situation, but without his female partner.

<sup>1</sup>Kālidāsa mentions *Kaiśika Rāga* in *Kumārasambhava*, VIII. 85; see V.S. Agrawala, *Kādambarī*, Varanasi, 1958, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>S.M. Nawab, *Masterpieces of Kalpasūtra Painting*, Ahmedabad, 1956, ch. I.

## Chapter Seven

# MITHUNA AS MAITHUNA

A motif is reinterpreted from time to time to expand its scope of artistic and cultural bearings. Thus, the representational implication of the Mithuna symbol seems to have undergone a change or dilated at several stages of its history. Its mystic and beatific suggestivity came to be accentuated in the medieval period when the symbol was particularly exposed with respect to its otherwise hidden aspect of *Maithuna*, i.e. coital act or union of male and female, with all its eroticism and phantasy involved (*Ills.* 5, 21, 86, 173, 214-219, 225). A Mithuna essentially implies this union; without this it may be said to be of no avail and has, evidently, no possibility of its inherent and universal symbology. But in art as in life it usually stands governed by the human conventions of decency, by the trammels of social set-up and morality.

On the early Indian monuments the Mithuna motif is treated more or less with a restrained expression and its known sculptural representations are generally to show no particular emphasis on the coital act itself. The Mithuna was then implicit and not explicit in its meaning and expression with respect to its connotation as Maithuna. In the Mithuna pair initially, the underlying idea of fertility was revealed only insinuatingly and not through its iconographic transcriptions as we find in the medieval period. This variance may be partly attributed to the attitude the artist held at one stage or the other with respect to the erotic animation of the symbol.

This is what we wish to emphasise here. A 'simple' Mithuna of man and woman indeed came to be stunted—due to its frequent occurrence—in its intrinsic significance, and as a new lease of life of it, it was transformed into an 'incisive' Mithuna-as-Maithuna. This fact can further be illustrated by taking an example of the changing representational formula in the case of images of divinities in Mithuna pairs. But we must remember that the divine couples were usually not shown in coital postures before the iconographic

take-over by the Father-Mother or Yab-yum image in later Tantric growth. An early relief of the divine couple Śiva and Pārvatī from the Kuṣāṇa and Gupta epochs (*Ills.* 50, 53) when compared with an image of theirs from the medieval period distinctively bears out the change in the style of their poses and gestures. While in the former they appear side by side with no erotic suggestion, in the latter the goddess will be found in a half embrace of the god, as sitting on his knee and with several intimate gestures of erotic reflection<sup>1</sup> (*Ill.* 233).

For our study here, we may distinguish the three aspects or contexts of the Maithuna, viz. the one related to the art of love-making proper in secular context which treats Maithuna for Maithuna's sake; the other with respect to its usage as symbol, ritualistic and religious; the third with reference to its portrayal on religious monuments and temples.

## I

A substantial tradition of specialised literature on erotics is known in India to have originated as early as the Vedic times. It is believed that there were a good number of texts exclusively devoted to the subject and composed with so much erudition that their authors were honoured in antiquity as sages and master-teachers (*ācāryas*, i.e. promulgators), like leading exponents in any other branch of sapiential knowledge. The last great authority in the list of Vedic sage teachers on the erotic Śāstra appears to be Vātsyāyana, whose treatise called *Kāmasūtra* survives to us in its extant version which roughly dates from the second-third centuries AD, though the teacher himself might have lived much earlier. Among earlier authorities quoted and appropriated in the *Kāmasūtra* a good many names are of such Vedic sage-teachers who are also known from other literary sources for their contribution to knowledge. But their particular texts on erotics are lost to us. There is every likelihood that most of them were never put to writing and were in use only mnemonically in the schools founded by those teachers. Moreover, the masterly perfection attained in the *Kāmasūtra*, which largely and critically drew upon its predecessors and assimilated much of their contents, presumably put them into background and their disuse as independent texts of teaching effected their oblivion. The Sūtras of Vātsyāyana also must have been studied in the school or academy founded after him through a succession of his disciples and

<sup>1</sup>The *Bhāgavata* (VI. 17. 4-8) is one of the earliest texts that mention the form of the great god Śiva with his consort in close embrace; according to the account, a Vidyādhara king Citraketu saw him seated at the head of an assembly of sages in the 'Mithuna union' (*mithunibhūya*) of the goddess. See also *Mṛcchakaṭika*, I. 2, alluding to the image of Śiva with Pārvatī having her creeper-like arm around his throat. In Buddhist tradition the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga (c. 4th cent. AD) describes lord Hevajra, or Vajrasattva, accompanied by his consort in the state of union (*yuganaddha*).

primarily by the mnemonic method before being written down in the available recension.

Śvetaketu, son of Uddālaka, is mentioned by Vātsyāyana as the first human exponent of the Erotic Śāstra. This Vedic sage is, however, known from the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* in a specific context that relates the mystery of sex relationship, as instructed to him by the King of the Pañcāla country.<sup>1</sup> From the *Kāmasūtra* we learn about the other great teacher Bābhavya, of the Pañcāla, who condensed and systematised the Śāstra after Śvetaketu. The initial growth of erotics as a knowledge seems to have its original venue in the Pañcāla country (region roughly north and west of Delhi), where the particular academy founded after Bābhavya saw this science flourish systematically. It is on the work of Bābhavya and its further exposition in his school that Vātsyāyana mainly based his chapters on sexual union that comprise almost a fourth of his book. Other worthies frequently cited by Vātsyāyana in other sections include the names of Dattaka, Suvarṇanābha, Ghoṣamukha, Gonardiya, Cārāyaṇa, Gaṇikāputra and Kucumāra each of whom had made his contribution to the special subject of erotic studies.<sup>2</sup>

It is not strange that the same Śvetaketu is credited in the tradition to be the first individual who challenged primitive society of promiscuous relationship and laid down the institutes of marriage.<sup>3</sup> The arcana of love as revealed to Śvetaketu in the Upaniṣad and what the sage himself would have propounded in his elaboration of the knowledge, appear basically intending a socially approved behaviour of the sex life. It is to fulfil the essentially religious desire of begetting sons from one's wife that the entire Indian tradition finds justification of the science of love-making.

In India sex activity was understood in the first place as a religious act for a religious purpose. As remarked by K.R. Pisharoti, "If ancient tradition and legends are any indication in the matter, the main motive of sex-life is the begetting of children for the performance of the funeral obsequies of the parents, so that they might have happiness ensured for them in the life hereafter, which Hindu religion holds out as the *summum bonum* of existence."<sup>4</sup> It is believed throughout in Indian literature, whether religious or secular, that the sexual activity with one's wife is as holy as any other performance or rite and has an aim beyond its very psychophysical experience. It is one of the primary human duties, but this duty has its obvious religious fulfilment only in the civilised set-up of marriage, and anything aberrant to the individual and social behaviour thus betrays that aim.

<sup>1</sup>*Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, Book VI.

<sup>2</sup>A.B. Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, reprint, London, 1953, p. 468; S.K. De, *Ancient Indian Erotics and Erotic Literature*, Calcutta, 1959, pp. 92-3.

<sup>3</sup>*Mahābhārata*, Poona critical edn., I. 113. 8-20; J.J. Meyer, *Sexual Life in Ancient India*, reprint, London, 1953, pp. 119-21.

<sup>4</sup>K.R. Pisharoti, 'Sex Life in Ancient India —Some Thoughts', *Journal of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, XXIII, 1942, p. 336.

In the revelation of the mysteries of marital love to Śvetaketu, the teacher perspicaciously ordained in the Upaniṣad : “Verily, indeed, as great as is the world of him who sacrifices with the Vājapeya (‘Strength-libation’) sacrifice, so great is the world of him who practises sexual intercourse, knowing this.”<sup>1</sup> It is further declared that “Many mortal men, Brāhman̄s by descent, go forth from this world impotent and devoid of merit, namely those who practise intercourse without knowing this.”<sup>2</sup> What was this knowledge in essence? The text when closely analysed exposes the great precept of erotic ecstasy that ensues from simultaneous orgasms of the male and the female. The union must essentially satisfy the wife and he who clumsily performs it acquires no merit of procreation and all his virtues and glory are appropriated by the woman. It is ‘with power, with glory’ that one gives glory to his partner thereby both become glorious.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, conjugal union is interpreted, from this very early period, to be an act of ritualistic implication. It is homologised to the sacrifice and prescribed to be performed as one sacramental ceremony effecting the spiritual awakening of both the uniting couple and the life conceived thereby. Its functional merit is the laying of seed into the fertile field duly prepared and sanctified :

“Let Viṣṇu make the womb prepared !  
 Let Tvaṣṭar shape the various forms !  
 Prajāpati, let him pour in !  
 Let Dhātār place the germ for thee !  
 O, Sinivālī, give the germ !  
 O give the germ, thou broad-tressed dame !  
 Let the Twin Gods implace thy germ—  
 The Aśvins, crowned with lotus-wreaths !”<sup>4</sup>

The sacred ordinances of the Sūtra texts, that were crystallised in the later Vedic period and continued in their Dharmaśāstra versions to hold on the Indian society through the ages, give ritual details of the edifying ceremony to be observed at the time of intercourse. However, these texts closely follow the injunctions as laid down in the Upaniṣad, though are usually brief owing to their aphoristic style. As it is analysed by M. Eliade, “In pre-Tantric India, we must distinguish two possible ritual values of sexual union—both of which, we may note, are archaic in structure and of unquestionable antiquity : (1) conjugal union as a hierogamy; (2) orgiastic sexual union, to the end either of procuring universal fecundity (rain, harvests, flocks, women, etc.) or of

<sup>1</sup> *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, VI. 4.3, translation by Hume, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, VI. 4.4, translations by Hume, p. 168.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, IV. 4.8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, VI. 4.21, translation by Hume, p. 172.

creating a 'magical defense'."<sup>1</sup> The marital union is transformed into a hierogamy being "a ceremony, comprising many preliminary purifications, symbolical homologisations, and prayers—just as in the performance of the Vedic ritual."<sup>2</sup> According to this modern authority,<sup>3</sup> we also have in the Upaniṣad a suggestive reference to certain obscure ideas concerning the reabsorption of semen when it is wished that woman shall not conceive. "He should first exhale, then inhale, and say : 'With power, with semen, I reclaim the semen from you' : Thus she comes to be without seed."<sup>4</sup>

Presumably in such references somewhere lies the origin of sexo-yogic practices but particularly with respect to one's family consecration. Of the other aspect of ritual copulation for the sake of phenomenal or universal creativity, the outstanding evidence we have in the Vedic ceremonies of the Mahāvrata and Horse-sacrifice.<sup>5</sup>

The secrets of the Erotic Śāstra appear to have found expression also in art from a considerable antiquity. Evidently, the subject had its illustrative aspect and that was for the welfare of the sexual life itself and fulfilling its social obligations. For this service the secret instruction through art representations (*Ills. 202-05*) was the best possibility, revealing to the worthy the demonstrational aspect of various modes and techniques of the sexual Āsanās (coital postures). At the same time, the figures of amatory activity were also to serve the virtuoso in love for pleasure.

In the Jātaka stories we are informed that the conventional lay-out of the residential buildings and palaces had a contingent of pleasure apartments. They were provided with series of depictions both in painting and sculpture showing erotic themes and postures. This part of the palace where the king and his harem stayed together for amorous enjoyments was especially equipped and furnished for this purpose being named as the Rativaddhana-prāsāda,<sup>6</sup> 'the palace to heighten the sex pleasure.'

Several Jaina canonical texts mention this same apartment of the royal house under the name Mohanagr̥ha, 'pleasure-house.'<sup>7</sup> From the *Arthaśāstra* it is clear that it formed part of the king's residence or Vāsa-gr̥ha.<sup>8</sup> In the literary tradition of subsequent ages, there are found several expressive terms denoting this innermost chamber presumably provided with illustrations of erotic themes,

<sup>1</sup>M. Eliade, *Yoga : Immortality and Freedom*, New York, 1970, p. 254.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 254-55.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>4</sup>*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, VI. 4.10, translation by Hume, p. 169.

<sup>5</sup>See below p. 68.

<sup>6</sup>Jātaka no. 460 (*Jātaka*, IV, p. 122).

<sup>7</sup>G. Roth, 'Mohanagr̥ha in *Mallijñāta* and in Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra*,' *The Jaina Antiquary*, XIX, no. II, Dec. 1953, pp. 1-11.

<sup>8</sup>*Arthaśāstra*, I. 20.



e.g. 'painted chamber' (*citra-śālikā*), 'sex house' (*surata-bhavana*), 'pleasure chamber' (*vinoda-āyatana*), 'bed-room' (*vāsa-dhāma*).<sup>1</sup>

The architectural treatise of Bhoja gives a conventional account of the motifs that were illustrated on the painted walls of the marital chamber. There were also to be shown the figures of women with their lovers engaged in amorous plays. They were shown bedecked with various ornaments, having the colour of the body as pale, and somewhat slender limbs possessed of ardent desire of carnal pleasure.<sup>2</sup>

## II

There should be recognised here one aspect or approach that understood and employed sexual union as an exclusive means of spiritual uplift or salvation. Thus is described and interpreted the Vedic Vāmadevya rite in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*: "This is the Vāmadevya Chant as woven upon copulation. He who knows thus this Vāmadevya Chant as woven upon copulation comes to copulation, procreates himself from every copulation, reaches a full length of life, lives long, becomes great in offspring and in cattle, great in fame. One should never abstain from any woman. That is his rule."<sup>3</sup>

Both the Buddhist and the Jaina canons refer to Maithuna, practised by a class of ascetics as a means of attaining Redemption (Nirvāṇa, Mokṣa).<sup>4</sup> And there can be no doubt or ambiguity that they claimed to have acquired through Maithuna the same paramount goal of Final Release or Salvation, on

<sup>1</sup> *Harṣacarita*, pp. 127, 148; *Kādambarī*, p. 50; *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra*, 34. 32; *Yāśastilakacampu*, II. 193; Kṣemendra's *Lokaprakāśa*, III, Srinagar, 1947, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> *Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra*, 34. 31-34.

<sup>3</sup> *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, II. 13.1-2, translation by Hume, p. 196.

<sup>4</sup> In the *Dīgha Nikāya* (*Dialogues of the Buddha*, II, 45, 50) the Buddha himself is found making reference to a heretical doctrine prevailing in his time which believed that the soul attains Nirvāṇa through the full indulgence of the five pleasures of the senses. It is called the '*pañca-kāma-guṇa-dīṭṭha-dhamma-nibbāṇa-vāda*' (see Beni Madhav Barua, *A History of Pre-Buddhist Indian Philosophy*, reprint, Varanasi, 1970, p. 337). Similarly, the *Majjhima Nikāya* describes a class of Śramaṇas and Brāhmaṇas who regarded no sin in the acts of lust and enjoyed sexual pleasures in the company of youthful female ascetics. Further, the *Kathāvatthu* (XXIII. 1-2; c. 3rd cent. BC) mentions *maithuna* as *dhamma*. (See Beni Madhav Barua, 'Maskari Gosāla's Early Life,' *Calcutta Review*, June 1927, pp. 262-63; M. Eliade, *Yoga*, p. 258). *Uvāsagadasāo*, ed. A.F.R. Hoernle, Calcutta, 1888-90, sec. 246 with commentary, pp. 158-59. fn., which quotes one Prakrit and two Sanskrit verses on it : "If there were no women with the charming red colour, then surely liberation (or salvation) would not be (real) liberation." "I say truly, I say well, I say really, again and again; in this unreal world, the only thing real is a beautiful (lit. deer-eyed) woman," etc. See comments on it by J.J. Meyer, *Sexual Life in Ancient India*, p. 133, fn. As can be made out from the Jaina *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* (II. 6.7-8), the Ājīvakas were one of such heretical sects who observed sexual intercourse with women and regarded no moral depravity for this act on the part of a monk (Jacobi, *Jaina Sūtras*, pt. II, p. 411).

which all Indian doctrines have pegged their metaphysical or mystic pursuits. The Maithuna as a soteriological discipline, indeed, came to be one of the basic approaches of Tantra and Tantric Yoga.

As early as the *Rgveda*, we have a glimpse of such an ascetic ideal. An entire hymn is given to record the socially indifferent and esoteric habits of a group of inspired ascetics then known under the epithet of *muni*.<sup>1</sup> They lived a life of total abandonment along with extreme austerities. They openly challenged the society with the dictum that mortals could see only their outer form and nothing beyond. All sanctity of their practices was in fact believed to have rested on their claim to emancipation from every social regulation. With long loose hair, having the bodily filth as their garment and girt only with the wind (i.e. nude), they roamed on the desert paths. Their technique of Munihood (*mauneya*) was to press (or control) the wind (i.e. breath), by which they acquired supernatural powers; etc. Of the typical features of their pursuits it is informed that, they undertook the course followed by wild beasts and the Apsarasas-and-Gandharvas. This in fact refers beyond doubt to their unrestricted sexual indulgence. Thus, a long-haired Muni is also said to know the highest taste, flavour or bliss.<sup>2</sup> (*Ill. 209.*) The most intensified experience of bliss on the bodily plane is verily derived from the sexual union; seemingly these ascetics had their way to soterial bliss paradigmatically in the sexual realisation.

It was thus for these Vedic ascetics to view and pursue Maithuna as a transforming means to salvation. But how? Had this ascetic sect in actuality any edifying possibility or was just a degraded base following of some lewds? To this we can have some positive answer only when this old sect is regarded to be linked in spirit with the later Yoga-Tantra. While seeking an answer to such questions we must not forget the fact that, at least in India, the society in pre-modern ages mostly revered and feared such sexo-yogic ascetics, or rather ecstasies, who openly censured and defied the society as we find them figuring in the above *Rgvedic* passage also. Their exalted nature indeed came to them through their severe austerities and Yoga transformation endowing them with particular mystic powers.

We must also differentiate between two kinds of spiritual pursuits of ascetic life. The first is in accordance with the social order, and individuals enter renunciation in their final stage of life after duly fulfilling mundane duties as householders. The second is of those who have only a shorter time in social bondage and renounce the world early in their youth to pursue

<sup>1</sup>*Rgveda*, X. 136. 1-7.

<sup>2</sup>Stanza *Rgveda*, X. 136.5 has not been correctly translated and understood previously. We make the following literal translation that is at the same time apparent in its mystic implications : "He, who has long hair and is following the path (i.e. conduct) of Gandharvas-and-Apsarasas and of wild animals, is knower of desire (*ketu*), is intimate (*sakhā*), knows the taste (*svādu*), and is foremost of ecstasies."

soterial goal. It is with the latter anchorites that the particular Yoga practices had the direct premise of either elevation or headlong fall. Initially, Yoga technique must have been mainly experimental and it is only at a later stage of their evolution that around their 'accomplishments' (*siddhi*, *iddhi*) an esoteric knowledge came into being.

What is Yoga ? Briefly we may put it as 'entering into one's "becoming" by tapping one's "being";' or, the realisation (*sādhana*) of powers that are in man, to their utmost limit. For it a myriad of expressions and elucidations are employed in the language of mystic analogues and homologues. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* specifies this as follows :

"This they consider as Yoga —  
This firm holding back of the senses.  
Then one becomes undistracted.  
Yoga truly is the origin and the end."<sup>1</sup>

This 'holding back of the senses'—i.e. perfect control over the five sense-knowledges and the mind<sup>2</sup>—is the discipline and ideology of Yoga for which bodily exercises, austerities, starvation, meditation, orgiastic manipulation, etc. are just various means and transforming techniques. There can be no denial of the fact that the most important realm of Yogic discipline is the stabilising of sexual energy. Kāma is the most vital force in our being. Thus, the symbols of celibacy, continence, *brahmacarya*, sexual abstinence, are regarded as highest attributes of the holy. But does it signify only the want of sexual union ? If so, where then lies the actuality of control over sexual desires and their tapping as energy-sources ? What at all is the use of going against the dictates of nature ?

Let us admit that the aim of the ancients was not at attempting a mere 'functional' continence. Often their aim was to raise innate "powers" by their *control of senses*. And for this goal a woman was an essential means of realisation (*sādhana*) through the sexual energy. Without the company and aid of *the woman*, how can one attempt at *his* knowing and controlling the limits of sex powers ? There can be no argument against the fact that only by employing woman, and other paraphernalia of sexual stimulants, one can practise and achieve such accomplishments (*siddhi*, *iddhi*) as union without orgasm, coitus reservatus, upward energy flow, etc. The woman may be one's wife, or for the recluse any woman within his reach. There is the Tantric maxim enjoining low-caste women as the best partners for Maithuna rites.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, VI. 11, translation by Hume, p. 360.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, VI. 10. Cp. the Tantric concept of *parāvṛtti* or 'reversal' in *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, IX. 46. See Eliade, *Yoga*, p. 400.

<sup>3</sup>This indeed should have come to be the rule owing to several factors; first to avoid confrontation with the higher social order; secondly the low-caste and aboriginal population usually inhabited the outskirts of the city civilisation, and for the Tantric who kept away from the civilised centres for his orgies such women were easily accessible; thirdly the low-caste enjoyed greater laxity in sexual morals; and fourthly their unrestrained emphatic passions. Also see Eliade, *Yoga*, p. 261, fn.

To fulfil this need of their mystic pursuits, the sexo-yogic or the Tantric, in their full-fledged sectarian organisation, came to have regular female colleagues, or disciples (*Ills. 210-14*), who are referred by such designations and mystic nomenclatures as Yoginī, Avadhūti, Nāyikā, Bhairavī, Dākini, Devī, Mudrā, and so on.

There are some depictions in the medieval temple sculpture that suggest that the Tantric sometimes practised utmost lecherous acts of the sort during Maithuna ritual, besides adopting a number of acrobatic coital postures and those that are followed by animals. He even employed animals instead of women, the converse of such depictions of an identical type are those which portray a woman Tantric being united by an animal (*Ills. 216-19*).

The Five Makāras—Pañcatattva, “Five Doctrines”, i.e. Matsya, fish; Māmsa, meat; Madya, intoxicating drink; Mudrā, meditative postures; and Maithuna, ritual coition—collectively constitute all the necessary requirements needed for sexo-yogic pursuits of the Tantric life. These are food, particularly meat and fish to nourish and heighten physical strength and virility (*Ill. 215*); all sorts of stimulating drinks; Mudrā, or bodily postures, exercises, meditative rituals, etc.; and sexual congress (*Ills. 214-16*). These are significantly termed as “five forbidden things,” but are simply essential and sacramentalised means for the truth-seeker in Tantric pursuit.<sup>1</sup>

As contrasted to the Tantric way of life all other religious doctrines and philosophies are mere pedestrian in nature. They have entailed only a slow process of progress towards the coveted end and one hardly knows if the destination can be reached within this short life-span. On the contrary, the way followed by Tantrics is most direct and expeditious for it essentially employs what can be termed, according to Prof. T.R.V. Murti,<sup>2</sup> the method of “shock tactics.” All learned distinctions and preferences of the human mind are put to shocking excitation thereby seeking to expressly resolve them as achieving the primordial state of mind. Under the procedure intense doses of fear (e.g. meditation in the cremation ground during dark mid-night), abhorrence (e.g. eating of corpse’s flesh or human leavings), intoxication, sex excitation, etc. are used even as preliminaries and the aspirant on this perilous path who wins over all duality (*dvandva*) of civilised preferences—of good and bad, of pleasant and unpleasant, of charming and dreadful, and the like—comes out to be true Hero (*vīra*). The Tantric adept attains freedom by entering the complacent state of mind (*samarasa*) for all distinctions and categories of the world. Those who fail have no claims for the Tantric discipline, either they succumb to the shock itself or find survival only as worthless creatures, designated as “base animals” (*paśu*).

There is no problem with decency or morality, which however is silly in the Tantric context and implies social bondage from which total emancipation

<sup>1</sup>See J. Woodroffe, *Śakti and Shākta*, 4th edn., Madras, 1951, ch. XXVII.

<sup>2</sup>This opinion was expressed by him in a talk.

is the first condition for a Tantric. It is an approach to salvation that utilises the very human senses as its vehicle and the very human body as its cosmos. But it always remains secret and esoteric and vehemently guarded by its exponents (from the uninitiated) for being the highest and the most dangerous path. The following is the verdict given by the *Kulārṇava Tantra*<sup>1</sup> on the Kaula way or Tantric Yoga in general : “Yogī cannot be Bhogī (i.e. enjoyer of the worldly pleasures) : the Bhogī cannot be conversant in Yoga. But the Kaula Way is a combination of both the Bhoga and the Yoga, hence it is the foremost path. Thus in the Kaula faith Bhoga is transformed into Yoga; sin is turned into virtuous deeds; the worldly circle is appropriated as (the means to) Salvation.” (III. 213)

### III

The ubiquitous presence of erotic portrayals on the walls of religious structures and temples, particularly of the medieval period, has often perturbed strikingly the feelings of the religious-minded Indian and his fellow Westerner. By way of an explanation, for the sake of justification, there have been given a number of theories and opinions on this point by the learned.<sup>2</sup> But most of them either present only curious observations of a defending nature, or partly approach the problem unsatisfactorily. One view may be found to be only too simplistic and the other just fantastic in its dealing. However, the difficulty is obvious. The Mithuna seems to have an obsession in the subconscious of the Indian people so as to find a prominent expression in their religious thinking and architecture. The motif that had such an overwhelming place on the sacred monuments of a vast civilisation is likely to be of manifold cultural bearing. It must have had a beginning and also a history of its emergence into popular favour. There might have been more than one strand of tradition behind such an assuming theme. It occurs and recurs as an essential element in the well-defined sculptural planning of the Hindu temple through the ages. There can hardly be a place more sanctified in purpose than a shrine of the god for a people who build it.

In the preceding pages we have been treating the antecedents of this symbol in early art particularly as Mithuna, and it will be our privilege here to see its most dynamic and frank appearance as Maithuna in the temple art of medieval India. This very fact of its frank portrayal in religious art is usually taken necessarily to be the conflicting, rather damaging, aspect of the symbol. On demands of propriety it is to remain ‘hidden’ although it is the reality of our existence. That is how there is so much objection against this symbol of life. Moreover, our ‘religious’ Mithuna of old has come to be a challenging

<sup>1</sup> *Kulārṇava Tantra*, II. 23.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, see the theories cited by F. Leeson, *Kāma Kalpa*, Bombay, 1962, pp. 31ff.

problem in modern times when there is supposed to be such freedom of thought. It may be that to-day it is often viewed anachronistically and out of its original religious context, that, indeed, used it as a pleasing and vivifying symbol.<sup>1</sup> We are not to consider the temple figures as merely erotic portrayals in isolation from their contextual totality of existence. Thus, there is virtually nothing to be justified or guarded against any subjective condemnation of this motif from the modern outlook regarding it as evidence of moral laxity and depravity of the society that depicted it. As Coomaraswamy puts it : "Popular explanations of such figures are scarcely less absurd than the strictures of those who condemn them from the standpoint of modern conventional propriety. They appear in Indian temple sculpture, now rarely, now frequently, simply because voluptuous ecstasy has also its due place in life; and those who interpreted life were artists. To them such figures appeared appropriate equally for the happiness they represented and for their deeper symbolism. It is noteworthy, in this connection, that such figures, and indeed all the sculptural embroidery of Indian temple, is confined to the exterior walls of the shrine, which is absolutely plain within : such is the veil of Nature, empirical life, enshrining One, not contracted or identified into variety."<sup>2</sup>

A temple is to be the abode of that Divine Principle to whom is ascribed the authorship of this created world, physical and spiritual, with all its antecedents and consequents. One approaching that symbol-of-the-divine that is within has to fulfil the laws of nature which are operative without. Thus it is no wonder that the appropriation of amatory representations on the temple exterior was intended to keep the individual, as he discovered his unfulfilled desires, away from his actual entry (not physical but spiritual) to the inner sanctuary. We may thus understand that the temple worship was, however, not primarily meant for the anchorite or recluse, who had his own way of Dharma and followed not the collective social idealism of the Triple Objective. For society, the Hindu temple was to represent, indeed, the entire aspect of its culture and through it, a full-fledged commentary, so to say, was invoked on human behaviours. Thus, in a temple, as anywhere, the Mithuna was not to be scared of and avoided, being symbolic of the one facet of man's three-sided prism-personality (as analysed in Indian psychology)—an aggregate of Artha (economic behaviour), Kāma (sexual behaviour) and Dharma (socio-religious behaviour),—aiming at the Fourth, the supra-physical concept of Salvation.

According to the commonplace native belief widely current in Orissa, the erotic portrayal on the temple walls was intended to protect the monument against lightning, storm and such other natural calamities.<sup>3</sup> This has often

<sup>1</sup>E.B. Havell, *The Ideals of Indian Art*, London, 1911, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup>Coomaraswamy, *The Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, reprint, New York, 1964, pp. 65-66.

<sup>3</sup>T. Bhattacharya, *The Canons of Indian Art*, Calcutta, 1963, p. 232.

been dismissed by the modern to be a mere superstition. But this 'superstition' seems to hold fast in the folk tradition and has also found its way to some of the medieval texts.<sup>1</sup> It certainly had a considerable appeal to the masses, and we must remember, all religious beliefs are nothing more than superstitions if viewed pragmatically. Every religious expression or ritual has its own sympathetic magic and this can hardly be denied in the case of amatory sculptures since they still 'protect' the walls of the edifice through the centuries.

A few late medieval treatises on the architecture indeed recommend the purposeful representation of amorous scenes, or figures of ascetics and deities in delightful plays on all types of buildings but with the exception of dwelling houses. The Orissan text *Śilpa Prakāśa* has to comment in some detail on the significance of *Kāma-bandha* or erotic reliefs in the temple building as follows:

"In this context, you listen, I expound the definition of *Kāma-bandha* according to Śilpa-knowledge. Kāma is the root of the world. From Kāma originate all beings. By Kāma primordial matter and all beings are withdrawn again. Without Śiva and Śakti creation is merely an imagination. Without the action of Kāma there is verily no birth and death. Śiva himself is visibly manifested as the glorious Liṅga and Śakti in the form of Bhaga. By way of their union this whole creation comes into being. This is called the work of Kāma. In the Āgamas (i.e. religious lores) this is the knowledge of Kāmakaḷā; its substance is extensive. A place without Kāmakaḷā (love-image) is known as a 'deserted region.' In the opinion of the Kulācāra sect a 'deserted region' is always mean, resembling a dark abyss and to be forsaken like the chamber of death. Without offering worship to Kāmakaḷā-yantra, the worship of Śakti and all meditative undertaking is futile like an elephant-bath. The building with this yantra on it is the Vira-mandira (i.e. shrine for Tantric adepts). All obstacles and fears are certainly destroyed (by it). At the mere sight of the yantra ghosts, imps, goblins, and other evil beings flee far away. . . . It is the visible bestower of power and all perfections. In the best shrines of Śiva and Śakti this yantra must certainly be set up so that the monument stands unmoved for ever. This secret yantra is to be kept the most hidden and is never to be shown to all. For this reason the Mithuna (love-scenes) are to be carved on its pattern. In the opinion of the Kulācāra sect, on the lovely sculptural bands of the middle wall portion (*jaṅghā*) and upper portion of the walls a composition of amorous scenes (*kāma-bandha*) should be placed as being the source of delight to people. The Kāma-bandha should always be made on the best offset-portions of the walls (*anarthapāga*) and on those (architectonic) forms that rise as corner buttresses and etc. (*koṇaka-ādi*) up to the spire."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Utkalakhanda*, XI, *The Indian Antiquary*, XLVII, p. 217. *Śilpa Prakāśa* (II. 536-37) explains the portrayal of amorous figures on temples as ensuring protection in general.

<sup>2</sup>*Śilpa Prakāśa*, II. 498-506, 536-40.

The above is indeed a traditional estimate of the amatory reliefs —of their religious intention and setting, —by a later medieval authority on the temple architecture. This clearly brings out the fact how a thick Tantric veneer on the orthodox creeds of medieval India had come to transfigure the temple architecture of the period. The fertility symbology of the Maithuna rites and figures, as indicated in the preceding pages, shows the delineation of the motif in the medieval period as a logical outcome of the preceding religious traditions.

As it has been remarked by J. Gonda, “Whatever the secondary or ‘symbolical’ interpretation given to these reliefs—the union of puruṣa and prakṛti or essence and substance, the ultimate union of the soul with the divine, their more practical function as magico-religious ‘lightning-conductors,’—it may safely be assumed that these representations of the amatory couples—which, as is well known, occurred also on Buddhist monuments even from early times and are sometimes very profusely applied—originate in ‘fertility beliefs,’ this term being taken in a wide sense, including also the belief in the luck-bringing functions of these reliefs.”<sup>1</sup>

There is in fact a tradition having high roots in antiquity with respect to the votive nature of sexual rites as part of sacred ceremonies and temple cultus. (Ill. 86.) As compared to the community rites followed by most nations of the ancient world and by primitive peoples universally, the hidden Tantric practices and mystic following appear, however, not altogether strange. A custom of religious prostitution in the temple place seems to have been prevalent in many an ancient religion. There is no place here to go into such details. However, let us quote the following observation by Frazer to remind ourselves of a common legacy of most civilisations in antiquity : “In Cyprus it appears before marriage all women were formerly obliged by custom to prostitute themselves to strangers at the sanctuary of the goddess, whether she went by the name of Aphrodite, Astarte, or what not. Similar customs prevailed in many parts of Western Asia. Whatever its motive, the practice was clearly regarded, not as an orgy of lust, but as a solemn religious duty performed in the service of the great Mother Goddess of Western Asia, whose name varied, while her type remained constant, from place to place. Thus at Babylon every woman, whether rich or poor, had once in her life to submit to the embraces of a stranger at the temple of Mylitta, that is, of Ishtar or Astarte, and to dedicate to the goddess the wages earned by this sanctified harlotry. The sacred precinct was crowded with women waiting to observe the custom. Some of them had to wait there for years. At Heliopolis or Baalbec in Syria, famous for the imposing grandeur of its ruined temples, the custom of the country required that every maiden should prostitute herself to a stranger at the temple of Astarte, and matrons as well as maids testified their devotion to the goddess in

<sup>1</sup>J. Gonda, ‘Ascetics and Courtesans,’ *The Adyar Library Bulletin*, XXV, pts. 1-4, Madras, 1961, p. 99.



the same manner. The emperor Constantine abolished the custom, destroyed the temple, and built a church in its stead. In Phoenician temples women prostituted themselves for hire in the service of religion, believing that by this conduct they propitiated the goddess and won her favour. 'It was a law of the Amorites, that she who was about to marry should sit in fornication seven days by the gate.' At Byblus the people shaved their heads in the annual mourning for Adonis. Women who refused to sacrifice their hair had to give themselves up to strangers on a certain day of the festival, and the money which they thus earned was devoted to the goddess. A Greek inscription found at Tralles in Lydia proves that the practice of religious prostitution survived in that country as late as the second century of our era. . . . In Armenia the noblest Families dedicated their daughters to the service of the goddess Anaitis in her temple at Acilisena, where the damsels acted as prostitutes for a long time before they were given in marriage. Nobody scrupled to take one of these girls to wife when her period of service was over. Again, the goddess Ma was served by a multitude of sacred harlots at Comana in Pontus, and crowds of men and women flocked to her sanctuary from the neighbouring cities and country to attend the biennial festival or to pay their vows to the goddess."<sup>1</sup>

In Indian literature, the earliest glimpse of certain obscure fecundative rites is to be found in the *Rgveda* and in subsequent liturgical descriptions of the Horse-sacrifice. It appears that at the core of all ritual deliberations of this sacrificial ceremony a very curious, rather orgiastic, fertility rite took place in which the Chief Queen lay down beside the slaughtered horse or his organ. Further remarkable is the detail as enjoining the king-sacrificer to lie, behind one of the fire-altars in sacrificial hall, in the lap of his favourite wife without embracing her but posing self-restraint to gain spiritual success.<sup>2</sup> Another outstanding fertility ceremony known in Vedic religion is the Mahāvratā, during the performance of which a harlot and a Magadha inhabitant copulated publicly along with exchanges of abusive names. According to some of the relevant texts, in addition to this pair many other couples copulated though outside the sacrificial ground. This ritual copulation was meant to preserve the virility of the community and fecundity in general.<sup>3</sup>

In the well-known story of sage R̥śyaśṛṅga (*Ills. 48, 221*) we are told that, when there was a long-drawn-out draught in the kingdom, the youthful daughter of the king was sent to seduce the young penitent, who had never seen a woman before; through the magic of their copulation, it is clearly stated, the rain god was forced to send mighty showers all over.<sup>4</sup> According to a

<sup>1</sup>J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, abridged, London, 1963, pp. 435-36.

<sup>2</sup>See Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣads*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1925, pp. 345f.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 351f.; also his *Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka*, London, 1908, pp. viii f., 72ff.; Gonda, 'Ascetics and Courtesans,' cit., pp. 78ff.

<sup>4</sup>See J. J. Meyer, *Sexual Life in Ancient India*, p. 565; Jātaka no. 526; *Mahābhārata*, III. chs. 110-13; *Rāmāyaṇa*, I. ch. 10.

story in the *Jātaka* book, a childless king 'sent out into the streets' his queen as Dharmanāṭakā (i.e. 'dancer in the service of religion', cp. later Devadāsī) to beget in the name of gods a child upon her by any one capable and desirous.<sup>1</sup> The institution of Devadāsī or religious harlotry is explicitly mentioned in a cave-inscription of c. 200 BC in the Ramgarh hills of Madhya Pradesh.

From some significant yet scanty evidence in early Indian art, the sexual rites appear particularly connected with the Mother-goddess worship. A stone plaque from Rajgir (*Ill.* 94) and certain Mother-goddess discs (*Ill.* 93), dating from the fourth-third cent. BC illustrate some details of cultic worship offered to the goddess in early historic period. The music, dance and drinking in dedication to the goddess presumably concluded in copulation by the two sexes. This latter fact is clearly evinced by a unique terracotta disc from Awra, Madhya Pradesh, which belongs to a date ranging from the first century BC to the first century AD (*Ill.* 223). Here we see the goddess Lakṣmī standing in the centre of a temple-like framework and a Mithuna performing intercourse on either side in the aisles. In further support we can perhaps cite those several representations of the Mithuna figures that occur with the image of goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī in the relief carvings at Sanchi, Bodhgaya and Junnar (*Ills.* 96-97, *ante* pp. 33-34).

As discussed earlier (*ante* p. 61), there was a sectarian class of mystic ascetics who sought their way to salvation in sexo-yogic practices. They had a vital role to play in the development of later Tantrism which had seemingly grown with the Mother-goddess cult also involving sexual rituals. In the beginning the woman that served as their instrument for religious pursuit (*Ills.* 11, 165, 210), came to be quite reasonably identified as the great Female Energy or the transcendent Śakti (*Ills.* 93, 94, 222, 231, 232, 236, 237). At a particular stage of India's religious history, the growth of Tantrism is to be understood, in the words of M. Eliade, "as a sort of religious rediscovery of the mystery of woman."<sup>2</sup> And thus with Tantrism or Śaktism the emphatic spiritual symbolism of the sexual act came to take over the religious thought and architecture.

Besides, it may be observed that when the ancient customs of ritual or temple prostitution, essentially meant for community fertility and virility, came in the face of evolved sexo-moral propensity of the society, to be mostly discontinued to be observed in their actual performance—at least so widely and consistently as were followed formerly,—they were to find their way formally to art representation in the service of religion. For their emphatic symbolism such fertility rituals were hardly to disappear from community beliefs; sometimes their religious function was understood as though to be fulfilled by carrying

<sup>1</sup>Jātaka no. 531 (*Jātaka*, V, p. 279). The epithet 'dhammanāṭakā', i.e. religious danseuse, by which the woman was known being given away to religion, is significant and this may be compared with the temple institution of Devadāsī in later times.

<sup>2</sup>*Yoga*, p. 202.

them out in imitative insinuations of the actual act. The ritual cohabitation was an ancient custom solemnly practised as a powerful measure against the danger of a loss of human fertility and plenty, which was doubtlessly a major question before man universally in pre-modern times. Despite its actual practice having fallen into disapproval the ritual symbol could hardly be left unattended; through a change of expression it got apparently a suitable representation in the temple art, and, thus, from its occasional festive performance by men and women in life it came to have a permanent execution by the couples in sculpted stones of sanctuaries. This, however, is a significant point that gets confirming evidence from the fact that in certain parts of the country where the Devadāsī (harlot-of-God)<sup>1</sup> custom (*Ill.* 220) was held fast and persisted until lately the temple structures are found to have hardly any or a very small proportion of their sculpture given to such Maithuna scenes that occur elsewhere in good numbers. For example, this seems to be the case at most of the temple centres in South India, the Deccan and wherever this subject could be studied at present in its extant remnants.

Some recent scholars, however, interpreted away the erotic themes on the medieval temples as reflections of the lascivious and corrupted practices of some decadent sect or sects flourishing in the contemporary ages.<sup>2</sup> But such a theory does not seem to carry conviction. We may only remark here that it is the grotesqueness of many of the sexual postures occurring on the temple walls wherein probably lies their meaning, symbolical implication and ambivalent spirituality. Are they representations of a human practice? Perhaps not. Just scaring they appear in their acrobatic distortion and fantasy and would suggest rather the *death* of all eroticism and pleasure on the worldly level. Presumably there was here a reflection on no human level but a symbolical intention aiming beyond it. It has been argued from another standpoint that erotic portrayals on temple walls were intended to condemn the moral depravity of certain religious sect or sects.<sup>3</sup> But it does in no way appear

<sup>1</sup>For Devadāsī see A.S. Altekar, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation*, 3rd edn., Varanasi, 1963, pp. 182-85; F. Henriques, *The Pretence of Love*, London, 1965, pp. 175ff. But the Devadāsī cult must not be confused or confounded with common harlotry as Henriques seems to have done.

<sup>2</sup>Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture, Buddhist and Hindu*, 2nd edn., Bombay, n.d., pp. 131, 133. In a similar strain Dr. H.D. Sankalia ('Fresh Look at Khajuraho,' *The Times of India*, Daily 9th April, 1966) thinks that the Khajuraho temples were meant exclusively for the king and his small group of courtiers as all the constituent parts in the temple architecture here are unusually small and could allow at a time the entry of a few persons only. As he says, "The remote situation of these temples and their exclusive use for the kings might also explain the rather unusual erotic element in these temples, though there are other explanations as well." Further in his opinion, these temples were not frequented in earlier times by the masses and hence there was no danger of erotic sculptures corrupting people's mind.

<sup>3</sup>L.K. Tripathi, 'The Erotic Scenes of Khajuraho and their probable Explanation,' *Bhārati, Bulletin of the College of Indology*, Banaras Hindu University, no. 3, 1959-60, pp. 95 ff. He has framed his criticism mainly against P. Chandra, 'The Kaula-Kāpālika Cults at Khajuraho,' *Lalit Kalā*, nos. 1-2, 1955-56, pp. 102ff.

convincing that such themes which on the one hand were taken disgustfully by the community were on the other given a considerable share in the temple sculpture just to repudiate them. No temple building was ever to serve the purpose of a social or religious censure of some particular 'antagonistic' sects. Every part of the religious edifice must have been sanctified, most sacred in its everlasting import and of an immediate moral reaction.

There is no denial at the same time of the fact that the carnalities here are just the allegorical equations of the essential union of the bisexual polarity in its divine essence. That which may be understood by us now on the sheer human level as erotic phantasy was shown on the temple walls as bringing out the basic truth of all religiosity—the divine connubium comprehended in sexual mundanity—for such was the aim of their authors.

We may be reminded here of the claim made by Kalyāṇamalla, the author of the erotic treatise *Anaṅgarāṅga*, one of the latest works in Sanskrit known of this kind : "Finally, let it be understood that every Shloka (stanza) of this work has a double significance, after the fashion of the Vedānta, and may be interpreted in two ways, either mystical or amatory."<sup>1</sup>

Even in the Bhakti mysticism, at the back of certain devotional formulations an idea of Mithuna dualism had come to be basically understood. Under the later cult of Bhakti, mystic devotion, the motif of the union or reunion of the individual soul with God was given a metaphorical elaboration in the imagery of the love of the herd-girls for Kṛṣṇa.<sup>2</sup> (Ills. 205, 227-29.) Every individual is a woman who aspires for the ultimate union with her lord, the Puruṣa. Thus in certain medieval Viṣṇuite sects even the male devotees dressed themselves and behaved like women with reference to their husband-lord Kṛṣṇa.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the 'union' was treated symbolically to be the sexual union both in literary descriptions and pictorial renderings. The best illustration of the theme on the mythical level is represented by the Rāsa-maṇḍala where Kṛṣṇa, the Universal Puruṣa, is encircled by a great dance-ring comprising those innumerable beings—the simulated females—who have attained His exalted 'company' through their intense devotion and absolute submission to Him.

In particular Caitanya, the great Vaiṣṇava mystic of medieval Bengal, preached the devotional ideal of Rādhā-bhāva, that is the love-attitude of Rādhā towards Kṛṣṇa. But most of the other Kṛṣṇaite sects had rather accepted for the devotee the motif of unassuming Gopi-bhāva or Sakhi-bhāva, which meant an assimilation of the individual soul with just any cowherd-girl (Gopī) or female companion (Sakhi) of the divine pair Rādhā-and-Kṛṣṇa in the

<sup>1</sup>*Anaṅga Raṅga*, translation by F.F. Arbuthnot and R.F. Burton, reprint, New York, 1964, p. XXIII.

<sup>2</sup>Coomaraswamy, *The Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup>For instance, Vaiṣṇava Sahajīās of Bengal; see S.B. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, Calcutta, 1969, pp. 125ff.

eternal play of their love. The highest spiritual gain the poet-saints like Jayadeva, Caṇḍidāsa, Vidyāpati and Haridāsa (*Ill.* 229) could think of as earned by their intense love-worship in Sakhī-bhāva was the Lord's favour of allowing an opportunity to witness, even from a distance, the eternal play of His dalliances with Rādhā, his ever inseparable Śakti, in the mythical land of Vṛndāvana. The champions of Sahaja (or Sahajīā) school gave a Tantric turn to the love-myths of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in supra-natural land that were also to be brought to the concrete level of this world, where men and women being physical manifestations of the spiritual archetypes must participate in the natures of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā respectively by devoting themselves to actual love-orgies as the lover and the beloved.

## Chapter Eight

# THE ETERNAL MITHUNA AND SAHAJA

ALREADY in the hierological thinking of the Veda the highest condition of man's becoming is found defined in terms of happiness and beatitude. Describing the supreme state of virtue the R̥gvedic seer speaks of the following motif of the most exalted felicity : "Immortality in that realm where there are joys and delights, enjoyments combined with felicity and extreme fulfilment of the desires of Kāma."<sup>1</sup> This blissful condition comes to be epitomised by the word 'ānanda', and in the Upaniṣads the essence of all human knowledge is comprehended under this concept, identified with the Ultimate Reality. Thus it is put in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* : "As the person embraced by the beloved knows nothing within and without, so this person embraced by the Intelligent Self knows neither within nor without. Verily, that is his real form wherein desire is satisfied and the Self is his Desire, without desire and without sorrow."<sup>2</sup> (III. 8) The difference between the two states of experiencing Ānanda may be just of the height and duration; on the two extremes of attainment, the one is gross and transitory, the other, subtle and everlasting. Analogically the bliss that is lover's pleasure and the Bliss that is Brahman are spoken of in Vedāntic ideology as cognates; the sexual bliss is called the paradigm of Brahma-Bliss. It is a matter of variation in degree. The self-extinction experienced in the state of sexual unification of the male and the female is just of the same kind as is attained at the merger of the individual Soul in the Ultimate Self or Brahman. According to the exposition given in the Upaniṣad, Yon is the supreme path, the highest achievement, the supreme world and the supreme bliss; by a small part of that Bliss all other creatures have their

<sup>1</sup>R̥gveda, IX. 113.11.

<sup>2</sup>Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, IV. 3.21.

living.<sup>1</sup> Human bliss is only a billionth or a hundred trillionth part of the Brahma-Bliss.<sup>2</sup>

The Buddha immediately after his experience of the Enlightenment is known to have uttered a strophe expressing a similar comparison :

“All pleasures of the worldly joys,  
All which are known among the gods,  
Compared with the joy of Nirvāṇa,  
Are not as its sixteenth part.”<sup>3</sup>

As early as the Pali canon, the nature of Nirvāṇa is understood as the highest pleasure, Paramasukha, Supreme Joy.<sup>4</sup> This age-old concept came to be greatly dwelt upon in the Tantric mysticism and is, in fact, the kernel of all its philosophy and belief. The same is revealed in Buddhist and Hindu Tantras by such other significant phrases as Mahāsukha, Great Bliss; Dharmakāya, Absolute Body; Bodhicitta, Thought of Enlightenment; Samarasa, Identity of emotion; Advaya, Nonduality; Sahaja, Sahaja-ānanda, Joy Innate; Yuganaddha, Duality unified as One (*Ill.* 234); etc.

In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, we have it stated thus : “The Mithuna of the two sexes is this syllable *Om*. Verily, when a Mithuna comes together the two sexes fulfil the desire (*kāma*) of each other.”<sup>5</sup> Equivalent to this mystic concept of *Om*, the symbol of divine union and Ultimate Reality (*Ill.* 241) that one finds occur as a rule at all creative beginnings, is the Buddhist phrase *Evam*, which also signified the male-and-female—Upāya-and-Prajñā, Vajra-and-Lotus (*Ills.* 239, 240)—union and is found as the initial formula of both the pre-Tantric and Tantric sermons.<sup>6</sup>

In Vedānta philosophy, Māyā is the principle of “covering”, is the “sheath of bliss” (*ānandamaya kośa*), which in the highest depth stays as enveloping the Brahman, Ultimate Reality. Brahman is beyond any concepts of will (*icchā*), activity (*kriyā*), not-will, inactivity or other such sorts of positive or negative attributes. It is through the agency of Māyā as Śakti, Phenomenal Energy as a positive principle of a lower order that this world as offspring is projected and brought forth. Thus, couched in an imagery of male-female Mithuna, which indeed is derived from the conventional symbology of the conjunction of opposites, the transcendent Māyā as a Female is said to receive as if in a mirror a reflection or “seed” of the Self-contained Brahman, who for this

<sup>1</sup>*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, IV. 3.32.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, IV. 3.32; *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, II. 8. See Paul Deussen, *The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*, reprint, New Delhi, 1979, p. 143.

<sup>3</sup>W.W. Rockhill, *The Life of the Buddha*, reprint, Varanasi, 1972, p. 33.

<sup>4</sup>See S.B. Dasgupta, *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism*, Calcutta, 1950, pp. 144-45.

<sup>5</sup>*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, I. 1.6.

<sup>6</sup>Alex Wayman, ‘Female Energy and Symbolism in the Buddhist Tantras,’ *History of Religions*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1962, pp. 80ff.

purpose descends to the level of Personal Lord (*Īśvara*), Determinate (*Saguṇa*) Brahman. Of this Union is released the chain of production, that is pro-creative as well as recreative process of the world. From the individual soul's approach, *Māyā* is Nescience (*avidyā*), Phenomenal Illusion, that hides from vision the Brahman, which as such "being enwrapped by the five sheaths that are produced of its own power, does not shine forth like water in a pond covered by unbroken masses of sedge that are produced by its own power. But when the covering is removed completely the clear water becomes visible to human beings, quenches the pangs of thirst and bestows utmost happiness."<sup>1</sup> By acquiring pure knowledge (*Vidyā*) one eliminates the universal Ignorance and thereby knows, reaches and becomes Brahman. An individual whirl merges with the Universal Centre. A single ripple on the surface mingles with the tranquility of Water. All apparent duality or multiplicity is removed by knowing the sole Reality, non-dual Brahman, "One-without-a-second." The very awareness or simple apprehension of the Ignorance leads one onto the path of acquiring Knowledge, no doubt by undergoing a prescribed course of exercises and disciplines of the most fervent religious life.

In Kashmir Śaivism, Parama Śiva is the Supreme Reality that is both the Universal Self as well as the all-pervading innermost self of every being. This world is a manifestation of the Supreme Lord's immanent aspect which is His Śakti, Creative Nature, Female Power, in no way distinct from Him, it being His Self-consciousness. He is understood as an undivided coalescence of pure Sentieny (*prakāśa*) and Self-consciousness (*vimarśa*)—Śiva and Śakti. The Supreme Lord blossoms forth with the descent of His Śakti.<sup>2</sup> In creative revelation or 'expansion' (*prasara*), Śakti assumes an infinite number of definitions of which five primary ones are *Cit* (Śakti as pure Sentieny), *Ānanda* (as Joy or Beatitude), *Ichhā* (as Will), *Jñāna* (as Knowledge) and *Kriyā* (as Action). First two of the above aspects are, however, nothing else in definition but the Principles of the Supreme and His Nature (*Śiva-tattva* and *Śakti-tattva*). He the pure Sentieny (*Prakāśa* or *Cit*) stays in union with Her the perfect Beatitude (*Ānanda*). Will, Knowledge and Action are the aspects that are instrumental for the union,—revealed through them for the creative order the Lord Śiva enjoys His own Glory, Śakti.

The Kṛṣṇaite cults of later Vedāntic development have *Mādhurya-bhakti* or the passionate love-devotion to the Lord Kṛṣṇa as their basic doctrine. According to their common myths, the Ultimate Self Kṛṣṇa residing in the eternal Vṛndāvana grove of His immaterial Cow-world has a Will for dalliance—this Will takes the form of His female counterpart Rādhā, produced from His left half. The right half is Himself and the left, Herself. For the creative play (*līlā*), the Lord transforms into Male and Female, Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā : He

<sup>1</sup> *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* of Śaṅkara, verses 149-50.

<sup>2</sup> *śaktipātonmiśita-pārameśvara*-, *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya* 1.



differentiates His Nature (*prakṛti*), Energy (*Śakti*), from His absolute preter-mundane Self. The feeling of this 'separation' indeed serves as the substratum of their union. It is from this worldly level or allegory of differentiation (*viraha*) that all effort and romance for Union is defined in terms of Mādhurya-bhakti or passionate love-devotion. Rādhā is the very essence of Kṛṣṇa, His Śakti in union with whom the Lord dwells in His eternal abodes of Vṛndāvana and Vaikuṇṭha attended by millions of free souls enjoying permanent fulfilment of their selfless love-worship in reciprocal sweet love of the Lord. (Ill. 227)

Passionate love is the sole bond between Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā who participate respectively in the natures of eternal man and worldly woman. Love alone for Love's sake constitutes the primordial plane where the play or *līlā* of their union takes place in pure spontaneity. The individual soul on the model of Rādhā or a cowherd-girl or Gopī, has to take on this path of love-devotion to complete self-surrender and abandonment to the Desire of Kṛṣṇa, the Love, who is the Ultimate Goal and the path as well leading to that Goal. But this love relationship is not of a common type, not that of a legitimate or married couple. Rādhā is "not-his-wife" (*parakīyā*) and Mādhava-Kṛṣṇa is "not-her-husband" (*mā-dhava*). Their exemplary love is of the illegitimate or rather antisocial type. Being an adulterous relationship against all social norms and values, it symbolises in fact the unconditional and boundless ecstasy of mystic love between the Lord as man and the individual soul as female.

The Tantric ideologies basically believed in the motif of the individual soul as male with reference to the Universal Soul as Female. It was, however, by way of the Vedāntic influence that the converse symbology to that as well was admitted as given above in case of the Vaiṣṇava theistic schools of passionate love-devotion.

Unlike other schools of religious philosophy, in the Tantra this all was not only theoretical or merely on a thought level but had a cardinal application in the actual practice. According to the Tantric doctrine, the pleasures of the flesh are indeed exemplary of the joys of the Soul. Whatever uplift is sought after by man on the spiritual plane, begins with the very experience of the senses, their faithful gratification and also their control directed towards a point or centre that is aspired for beyond normal human habits. Thus is the creed of all Tantric disciplines as it is epitomised in the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* as follows : "No one succeeds in attaining perfection by employing difficult and vexing operations; but perfection can be gained by satisfying all one's desires."<sup>1</sup> The above dictum evidently reveals the paradox of Tantric outlook. According to it, it is not for infatuated pleasure that one is to satisfy one's all desires but it is the only way to control and employ the 'desires' to their highest capacity reaching the Ultimate Pleasure or Sahaja-bliss. This doctrine of perfecting one's desires to their ultimate limit is called Rāga-caryā, 'the conduct of passion'.

<sup>1</sup>*Guhyasamāja Tantra*, VIII. 3 (translation from Eliade, *Yoga*, p. 205).

that is Agra-caryā, 'the foremost conduct.'<sup>1</sup>

The sexual union is indeed not the preliminary but the final pursuit of a Tantric. A tiro or novice is not allowed to go after it; he must first complete the full course of rigorous training of his sense-powers, before being capable of taking the risk of experimenting with the rite of Maithuna. As M. Eliade has noted about it, "*Maithuna* makes its appearance as the consummation of a long and difficult apprenticeship. The neophyte must acquire perfect control of his senses, and, to this end, he must approach the "devout woman" (*nāyikā*) by stages and transform her into a goddess through an interiorised iconographic dramaturgy. Thus, for the first four months, he should wait upon her like a servant, sleep in the same room with her, then at her feet. During the next four months, while continuing to wait upon her as before, he sleeps on the right side, then they will sleep embracing, etc. The goal of all these preliminaries is "autonomisation" of sensual pleasure—regarded as the sole human experience capable of bringing about the nirvāṇic bliss—and control of the senses—that is, arrest of semen."<sup>2</sup>

But the 'sexual union' is not a mere symbol stating the great truth, as may be the case in some non-Tantric metaphysics or poetic imagery. It is the path or vehicle itself : the sexual union being employed to reach the quintessence of all union. Thus the sexual union is both a concrete ritual and a continuous process of homologisation of the union of opposites on successively rising and transcending horizons and plexuses. The Tantric discipline has never been the basis either of pessimistic asceticism or of materialistic hedonism. It has its own way so concrete and so subtle. Folly or failure in *sādhana* is only identical to headlong downfall and death.

The highest mortal joy that ensues from the coital act is only momentary or ephemeral with the discharge of semen; its normal downward flow when checked and reversed by the Yogī towards the seat of consciousness in the Lotus—the "return of semen"—marks the emanation of the Supreme Bliss that is permanent and cause of immortality. Thus it is *śukra* or semen virile that is sometimes described as the Supreme Bliss. In the *Havajra Tantra* the lord Buddha himself says : "I am existence, I am not existence, I am the Enlightened One for I am enlightened about what things are. . . . My nature is that of Sahaja-bliss and I come at the end of the Joy that is Perfect (*Parama-ānanda*) and at the beginning of the Joy of Cessation (*Virama-ānanda*). I am the lord with the thirtytwo marks, the lord with eighty characteristics; I dwell in the Sukhāvati of the Bhaga (Vagina) of the woman and my form is Śukra (Semen) —without that (i.e. Śukra) there is no bliss and without bliss this would not be. Since it can never be effective without the other, bliss ensues only in union with female divinity."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Guhyasamāja Tantra*, ed. by B. Bhattacharya, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Eliade, *Yoga*, p. 266.

<sup>3</sup>*Havajara Tantra*, ed. by D.L. Snellgrove, London, 1959, vols. I-II, II. ii. 38-41; II, pp. 48, 50.

The Sahaja-bliss or Mahāsukha is not to be misunderstood as gross sex pleasure. It is the subtlest and the highest state of becoming that could only be reached by experiencing distinct stages or moments of bliss in an ascending order. This suggests the situation of several *cakras* or centres of consciousness at different planes or levels of anthropomorphic personality (*Ill. 238*). The *cakras* along with their particular 'flavour' of Joys make the individual personality transform stage by stage into cosmic existence or selfless immortality.

Being strictly esoteric by nature Tantra had to evolve a vocabulary of its own: words having their absolute definitions with reference to the essential concepts of modal duality and the ultimate Identity (Samarasa), though in common usage *prima facie* they may appear quite vague and obscure. For as a necessity the Tantric language must employ paradoxical and grotesque diction owing to the very inexpressibility of experiences and realisations and also for their unique value of keeping the knowledge unintelligible to every one, who is not initiated. If it is frequently violating all codes of decency it is by way of an open defiance to social or moral concern.

Tantra literally means also a loom, on which the fabric of ideas and symbols is woven according to the choice and demand of the vision. Tantra is always a doctrine of expansive symbology which at unfolding encompasses all that has been, that is and will be. A Tantric symbol thus *prima facie* may appear only a dwarfish idea, a puerile or absurd action, unless it assumes a gigantic form transcending the cosmos : but this is possible only when it is invoked beyond time and space, beyond moral or social limitation.

Similarly the Tantra came to evolve a new and dynamic iconology of its own though fully drawing upon the rich repertoire of symbols and motifs of the common tradition. But it had a basic contribution to make. Thus it uses primarily abstract forms, aniconic, geometrical and diagrammatical; anthropomorphic deity-concepts and symbols are only in secondary appearance veneering the underlying cosmic pattern or diagram. Side by side, it also utilises an iconology of colours that presented with an expansion of symbology multiple combinations of forms and colours.

Point is the subtlest 'form' to be conceived for the sake of a working convenience. Otherwise a point is symbolical of the Void or ultimate nothingness. But the multiple potentialities of a point, Bindu, as it is a centre, are always inherent in it. The supreme lord, or the source of all creation, is at rest in that point having within all universes. Thus the highest 'form' in Tantric symbolism is the Point : the Centre : the Bindu, wherein all activities are supposed to be at rest—that being only conceptual. The worldly or creative phenomena are extrovert, moving without from the centre. The Tantric aim is to go against this normal current. It approaches gradually through *sādhana* the inner reality—centring into the receding configurations of the point—a Nonduality, a Void, a pure Form. Thus the innumerable 'circles' appearing around a 'centre' typify the outward manifestations, they are only apparitions as they never disturb the 'centre.'

Based on geometrical symbolism, a triangle (*bhaga*, *trikoṇa*, *śṛṅgātaka*) is the next complete form to the absolute Bindu. It is a perfectly enclosed figure with the least involvement of formal or linear manifestation, and yet having a possibility of enclosing and reverting back to the Bindu. A triangle transcepted of its triple projections is a nearest analogue to the Subtlest Bindu. The other emblematic form of the Bhaga or Yoni epitomising creative manifestation is the Lotus, *Padma*, that mostly occurs in its multiple petal-forms in the outer circle of the *Cakra* (Ils. 236-37).

Point symbolises Puruṣa or Liṅga. Triangle stands for Prakṛti or Yoni. Their union is illustrated by a Tantric diagram or Yantra—in the same way as it is by the Liṅga-Yoni icon or by the conjoint pair in Maithuna. It is on such a symbol of the Eternal Mithuna that one meditates to realise the nature of the ultimate knowledge.

As illustrative of this language of yogico-tantric symbology the following textual citations may be made on the nature of the Absolute Joy, Eternal Union :

“In space (*kha-dhātu*) and in the lotus are the triangle (*bhaga*) and knowledge (*jñāna*) respectively. Here is meditation and here is union, thence is bliss (*sukha*) self-experiencing, that is called the circles (*cakras*) which are in right order. Bodhicitta is the divinity, is semen (*śukra*) that arises in due order. Thus the Sahaja is twofold, for Wisdom (*prajñā*) is the woman and Means (*upāya*) is the man. Thereafter these both are twofold distinguished as absolute and relative. In man there is this twofold nature, *śukra* and the bliss arising from it, in woman too it is the same, *śukra* and the bliss arising from it.

“It is here that we have the distinction of the four kinds of Joy (*ānanda*), since the Sahaja is fourfold in process of realisation. The first joy (*ānanda*) is the Vira (or Yogin), and perfect joy (*parama-ānanda*) is the Yoginī, extreme joy (*surata-ānanda*) is all-embracing unity, and by means of that bliss one is omniscient. From *Ānanda* (Joy) is some bliss, from *Paramānanda* (Perfect Joy) yet more. From *Viramānanda* (Joy of Cessation) comes a passionate state. The Sahaja Joy is the finality.”<sup>1</sup>

“Bhaga is Śakti and Kāma is Śiva possessing Bhaga. Both of them are bestower of all kinds of prosperity. Both are inseparably interwoven together, and are of equal eminence, nature and power, and the eternal source of the Universe.”<sup>2</sup>

“Four Cakras presided over by Śiva and five Cakras presided over by Śakti—these nine make the Śrī-Cakra, which is the body of Śiva and Śakti. A triangle, an eight-petalled figure, two ten-petalled figures, and one fourteen-petalled figure are the five Cakras of Śakti. One Bindu, an eight-petalled figure, one sixteen-petalled figure and one square are the four Cakras of Śiva.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hevajra Tantra*, I. viii. 26-32.

<sup>2</sup> *Tripuropaniṣad*, 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Bhairavayāmala Tantra* as quoted in his commentary by Lolita on the *Saundaryalaharī*.

“The all-pervasive Goddess assumes in time of world’s stay the form of a straight line (*rju-rekhā*); in time of world’s dissolution She takes the form of a Bindu; and for world’s creation again. She is of the luminous form of a Triangle.”<sup>1</sup>

If one were to know the world within, one ought to get emancipated from without. In short, Yoga is introversion of man’s outward tendencies towards the centre within. By stopping the centrifugal releases the Yogī returns to the navel of immortality (*amṛtasya nābhi*). The desires that, in their efferent flow of human realisation, identify exhaustion and mortality, are aimed at their ‘upward’, that is ‘inward’ flow, their storage in the centre transforming them as the powers of mind that identify plenum and immortality. It is the objective doctrine one finds as the starting point in all sorts of mystico-ascetic practices, namely, self-mortification, austerity, bodily purification, Yoga and Tantra. Like sparks from the flame radiating away are the desires. Thus, to emancipate individual life from its gradual ‘scattering’ is aimed in the state of desirelessness. It is the cessation of multiple radiations of desires and their attainment to One Desire : this ultimate concept being described thus variously as the sparkless, smokeless Fire, the Void, the unstruck, unheard Sound, the Identity of emotion, the Sahaja, and so on.<sup>2</sup>

The word Sahaja is, however, of the widest usage and is common to all Tantric disciplines as well as to vernacular mystic poets. It is usually interpreted as meaning ‘innate’, inborn, natural and also sometimes as ‘intuition’ or intuitive knowledge. But to comprehend its great Tantric implication it must be understood both literally and semantically to signify the “experience or concept that emanates from Union (*saha*).” It denotes the inexplicable, ultimate joy or bliss that is in the state of union. As the *Hevajra Tantra* puts it : “The Sahaja is proclaimed that which arises in spontaneity. The Sahaja is called self-nature, the single unity of all phenomenal forms.”<sup>3</sup>

The ‘union’ (*saha*) that produces this ultimate essence (Sahaja) is Maithuna, i.e. union of the Mithuna, the two “opposites.” It is to this dialectic of the union of the principles of polarity that the entire cosmos can be referred

<sup>1</sup>*Pratyabhijñāna Tantra*, see R. Shamasastri, ‘The Origin of the Devanāgarī Alphabet,’ *The Indian Antiquary*, XXXV, 1906, p. 258. Cp. *Vāmakeśvara Tantra*, cited by the gloss on the *Kāma-Kāla-Vilāsa*, text and translation by Arthur Avalon. Madras, 1961, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup>Cp. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, III. 15, on Brahman, the Ultimate Reality:

“What is soundless, touchless, formless, imperishable—

Likewise tasteless, constant, formless, odourless,

Without beginning, without end, higher than the great, stable

By discerning That, one is liberated from the mouth of death.” (Hume, p. 353).

<sup>3</sup>*Hevajra Tantra*, I. X. 41.

despite its outward multiplicity and expanding cycles of manifestations on innumerable centres and planes. In origin the word 'Yoga' also literally signifies this concept of 'Union'. An exemplification of the same is found in Tibetan Tantrism by the iconographic form of Yuganaddha, the eternal union of the male god and his female energy (*Ills. 234, 235*). Yuganaddha is a principle of union beyond any sexual existence; it shows divine connubium of the opposites of life in the way of ultimate realisation of Nonduality or Biunity or Void. This is called Mahāmudrā, the Absolute Attitude, the Supreme Symbol.

It is indeed the same indefinable notion that admits of various such expressions when symbolised through language or art. For the Tantric it has exclusively a concern with realisation and actual experience of the ultimate condition, i.e. the state of equilibrium of all 'polar interaction' called Samarasa, Kāmakalā, Yuganaddha, Yab-yum—all based essentially on the erotic ideology of Mithuna the Eternal.



## GLOSSARY

*Ācārāṅgasūtra* : the first book of the twelve canonical scriptures of the Jainas, written in the Prakrit language.

*Aditi* : Vedic Mother-goddess.

*Āgama* : traditionally handed down doctrines; texts of such lores, particularly of Tantra (q.v.).

*Agnāyī* : wife of god Agni (q.v.).

*Agni* : Vedic god of Fire.

*Alakā* : mythical city of god Kubera (q.v.).

*Amarāvati* : mythical city of god Indra (q.v.).

*Ambikā* : (Skt) Great Mother.

*Amma* : (Dravidian) Great Mother.

*Ānanda* : joy, bliss; in the Upaniṣad and the Vedānta philosophy, one of the three attributes of Brahman (q.v.), as pure Joy, Beatitude.

*Ānanda-laharī* : “The Wave of Mead”, a hymn by Śaṅkarācārya (c. 800 AD) addressed to the Great Goddess.

*Anarthapāga* : off-set wall-portions on either side in the temple elevation.

*Apsaras* : class of celestial dancers or nymphs.

*Ardhanārīśvara* : ‘the lord who is half female,’ an epithet for Śiva (q.v.) referring to his androgynous form; a unique symbol-expression for ultimate man-woman or Mithuna coalescence.

*Arthaśāstra* : “The Science of Polity”, n. of the reputed text by Kauṭilya (q.v.).

*Āsana* : bodily posture, employed as a means of realisation in meditation or copulation.

*Assamukhī* : horse-headed ogress.

*Aśvaghoṣa* : a classical Sanskrit poet, c. 2nd cent. AD, his famous poems being the *Buddhacarita* and *Saundarananda*.

*Aśvins* : the Vedic physician-gods who were twins.

*Atharvaveda* : the fourth Veda (q.v.) which mainly deals with magic and medicine.

*Ātman* : soul; the individual self.



*Avadhūti* : the woman who has shaken off worldly obligations and feelings; a female Yogī (q.v.) or Tantric.

*Avalokiteśvara* : the Bodhisattva (q.v.) presiding over the present aeon.

*Āvaraṇa-devatā* : deity or deities in charge of peripheral zone in a Maṇḍala (q.v.) or Yantra (q.v.).

*Bhaga* : the female genital; Yoni (q.v.).

*Bhairavi* : (1) n. of a Rāgini (q.v.); (2) in Śaiva Tantra, n. for the female partner embodying the Goddess aiding in sexual rites.

*Bhakti* : loving devotion and self-surrender to the deity as a means of salvation.

*Bhāravi* : a Sanskrit poet of the seventh century, author of the *Kirātārjunīyam*.

*Bhoga* : worldly pleasures.

*Bhogī, Bhogin* : 'one who habitually indulges in worldly pleasure.'

*Bindu* : (word for) point, drop; point-as-centre; in Tantra, a symbol-name of semen virile, male energy and principle, shown white in colour.

*Bodhisattva* : a Buddhist saint, who out of utter compassion postpones entering into Nirvāṇa (q.v.) till all suffering beings are helped by him to attain their enlightenment.

*Brahmā* : one of the principal gods of Hinduism, his function in the popular Hindu Trinity, comprising Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, is that of the Creator.

*Brahman, Brahma* : Absolute One; concept commonly used throughout Indian tradition for the self-existent, impersonal Spirit; Universal Soul.

*Brahma-Bliss* : pure bliss or Beatitude which is the nature of Brahman (q.v.).

*Brahmacarya* : state of continence and chastity.

*Brāhmaṇa* : class of Vedic prose-books treating myths and rituals, considered next in sanctity as well as in antiquity to the Vedas (q.v.). For example, the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, *Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa*.

*Bṛhatsamhitā* : the treatise on astronomy and architecture by Varāhamihira, c. 500 AD.

*Buddha, the* : Enlightened One, the historical teacher Gautama Buddha who founded Buddhism, c. 500 BC. In later Buddhist pantheon, he came to be recognised as one of the many figures embodying the principle of Enlightenment. He comes at the end of a cycle of 24 Buddhas, of which list the last seven form a group as Seven Mānuṣi or Mortal Buddhas, with Maitreya yet to come as the eighth. In another mythical setting, there are Five Dhyānī or Divine Buddhas, including three preceding and one succeeding the Gautama Buddha, by name Amitābha. They are impassive and absolute of nature and are represented by Five Bodhisattvas, who supervise the world in successive ages with the help of Five Mortal Buddhas (as conforming to the fivefold scheme they are reckoned only five with Gautama as the Fourth and Maitreya as the Fifth), who perform the creative duty as their active agents. Around the above three sets of five figures a complex pantheon of their respective Female Energies and attendant divinities is woven. The concept of one prominent Buddhahood

- reappeared as Ādi-Buddha 'Primordial Buddha' with his female Ādi-Prajñā 'Primordial Knowledge'.
- Caitanya* : a great Vaiṣṇava mystic of Bengal, fifteenth century, preaching an idealistic Monism and the doctrine of *Mādhurya-bhakti* (q.v.).
- Caitya-hall* : kind of Buddhist temple with a Stūpa (q.v.) inside.
- Cakra* : wheel, circle (1) 'plexus', one of a series of superposed centres-of-consciousness in the subtle body, usually conceived in form as 'discs' or 'lotuses' or 'knots'; (2) a Yantra (q.v.) of circular shape.
- Cālukya, the Western* : imperial dynasty of rulers of the Deccan, with their capital at Badami, Bijapur district, Mysore, c. 550-750 AD.
- Caṇḍidāsa* : a Vaiṣṇava mystic poet of Bengal, fourteenth century.
- Dākinī* : in Tantric sexual rites, female partner embodying a form of the Goddess.
- Dakṣa* : Vedic Creator-god.
- Dampati* : married couple as householders; husband and wife.
- Deva* : god; divine figure.
- Devadāsī* : dancing-girl of the god; temple harlot.
- Deva-kumārikā* : celestial maiden.
- Deva-dhītā* : (Pkt.) celestial maiden.
- Devī* : goddess; in Tantra, n. for the Goddess or her form, embodied by the female partner in sexual rites.
- Dharma* : the binding socio-religious laws; religion; one of the *Puruṣārthas* (q.v.).
- Dharmacakra* : Wheel-of-Law.
- Dharma-śāstra* : sacred law-books of the Hindus.
- Dhātār* : Vedic god presiding over procreation and marriage.
- Digambara* : 'one who has the directions for his clothing'; sky-clad, stark naked, an epithet of Śiva, also of Jina (q.v.).
- Divyāvadāna* : Sanskrit Buddhist text, c. 2nd cent. AD, containing edifying stories of Buddhist following.
- Drapsa* : (Vedic Skt.) drop.
- Gahapati* : (Pkt.) householder, a philanthropist householder, particularly from the merchant community.
- Gaṇa* : an imp, or host of such erratic spirits.
- Gandharva* : class of demigods presiding over sex and music.
- Gandharvī* : Gandharva woman.
- Garuḍa* : mythical bird, serving as the vehicle and emblem of Viṣṇu (q.v.).
- Gautama* : the family-name of the historical Buddha (q.v.).
- Great Epic, the* : the great Indian epic poem named *Mahābhārata*, containing a quarter of a million lines, attributed to sage Vyāsa.
- Guhyasamāja Tantra* : "The treatise of the esoteric community." n. of a Tantric Buddhist text, regarded by some as the oldest extant Tantra work, AD 3rd cent.-5th cent.

- Gupta period* : cultural epoch of Indian history, early 4th cent. AD to 600 AD.
- Haṁsa* : goose or swan.
- Haridāsa* : a great Vaiṣṇava mystic of north India, sixteenth century; see Ill. 229.
- Hārītī* : tutelary goddess regarded as spouse of Kubera (q.v.).
- Hevajra Tantra* : "The book of Tantra-knowledge preached by god Hevajra," n. of a Tantra text in Skt.
- Himkāra* : the howling sound or cry used in Vedic ritual.
- Hiranya-garbha* : Golden Germ (*hiranya*=gold; a symbol for male power+*garbha*=germ or embryo).
- Hiranya-aṇḍa* : Golden Egg (*aṇḍa*=egg).
- Horse Sacrifice* : great Vedic sacrifice, performed to acquire supreme temporal power, in which the horse makes a solar symbol of cosmic death and rebirth.
- Iddhi* : Buddhist word for Siddhi (q.v.).
- Indra* : Vedic god presiding over rain and war.
- Indrāṇī* : wife of Indra (q.v.).
- Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa* : see Brāhmaṇa.
- Jaiminiya Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa* : see Upaniṣad.
- Jalamānuṣa-mithuna* : male-female pair of such beings whose body below the waist is of waves.
- Jaṅghā* : thigh; the wall-portion of temple building.
- Jātaka* : the story of Buddha's former birth; the Pali canonical book with its commentary giving such stories.
- Jayadeva* : a great Kṛṣṇaite poet of Bengal, twelfth century, author of the *Gīta-Govinda*, a lyrical epic on the divine love-adventures of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā (q.v.).
- Jina* : the Victor; a Tirthaṅkara (q.v.); an epithet also of the Buddha or other perfected souls.
- Jugaliā* : (Pkt) see Yugalika.
- Kailāsa* : the mythical mountain-abode of god Śiva (q.v.).
- Kālidāsa* : the most celebrated classical Skt. poet, author of three epic-poems and three dramas, c. 5th cent. AD.
- Kalpa* : (1) 'which is formed in the mind;' (2) aeon.
- Kalpa-druma*, *Kalpa-vṛkṣa* : the Wishing Tree.
- Kalpa-latā* : the Wishing Creeper.
- Kalpa tree* : the Wishing Tree.
- Kāma* : desire, love, sexual sentiment; (1) the personified God of Love; (2) desires, gratification of desires, as one of the *Puruṣārthas* (q.v.).
- Kāma-bandha* : sexual posture; a frieze on temple wall showing erotic scenes.
- Kāmadhenu* : the mythical Cow granting all desire.
- Kāma-kalā* : (1) art of love-making; (2) in Tantra, a symbol of supreme reality : *Kāma*=Śiva or absolute male principle; *Kalā*=Pārvati or transcendental female energy : their eternal union is *Kāma-Kalā*.

- Kāma-kalā-yantra* : symbol-diagram on Kāma-kalā (q.v.).
- Kanyā* : maiden.
- Kanyā-bandha* : temple wall-fascia carved with maiden figures.
- Kanyā-pradāna* : the daughter-giving ceremony by parents, in Hindu marriage.
- Kashmir Śaivism* : n. of a non-Vedic system of monistic philosophy and mysticism, developed in Kashmir during the ninth century, regarding Parama Śiva as Absolute Unity.
- Kautilya* : the reputed Brahmin diplomat and author on polity, his illustrious book *Arthaśāstra* (q.v.), c. 350-300 BC.
- Kinnara* : class of mythical beings; centaur.
- Kinnari* : female Kinnara (q.v.); centauress.
- Konaka-ādi* : 'konaka and etc.'; *koṇaka*=corner buttresses of temple walls.
- Kṛṣṇa* : n. of Viṣṇu (q.v.) in his most celebrated and complete incarnation, worshipped as the object of loving devotion by his followers.
- Kubera* : the god of riches and pleasures, presiding over the Yakṣas (q.v.) and other genii.
- Kula* : family; the particular community of Śakti worshippers to which one belongs by birth or initiation; n. for Śakti (q.v.) and the rites dedicated to Her.
- Kulācāra* : the conduct or way of the Kula (q.v.) sect.
- Kulārṇava Tantra* : "The Ocean of Kula knowledge", n. of a Tantric text in Skt.
- Kaula* : member or follower of the Kula (q.v.) sect; belonging to the Kula (q.v.).
- Kumārīkā* : maiden.
- Kuṣāṇa period* : cultural epoch of Indian history, c. 1st cent. AD-300 AD.
- Lakṣmī* : see Śrī-Lakṣmī.
- Liṅga* : ithyphallus; the phallic emblem of Śiva (q.v.).
- Madhu* : mead, honey-of-life.
- Mādhurya-bhakti* : passionate love-devotion to the lord Kṛṣṇa (q.v.).
- Madya, Madirā* : 'Wine', the use of intoxicating drinks as one of the Makāra (q.v.).
- Māgha* : a classical Skt. poet, author of the *Śiśupālavadha*, c. 8th cent. AD.
- Mahāmudrā* : in Tantric rites, the sexual unification with one's female partner who embodies the Great Goddess; this female partner.
- Mahāvamsa* : the Ceylonese chronicle of early Buddhism, composed in Pali about 500 AD.
- Mahāvratā* : 'Great Vow', n. of a Sāman (q.v.) and its rituals.
- Mahī Mātā* : Earth Mother, or the Great Mother.
- Maithuna* : relating or belonging to a Mithuna; male-female union or copulation; sexual rites, as one of the Makāra (q.v.).
- Maithuni* : relating or belonging to a Mithuna or Maithuna (q.v.).
- Majjhima Nikāya* : one of the Pali Buddhist canonical books.
- Makara* : a fantastic sea-monster; usually confounded with the crocodile.

- Makāra, Pañca-makāra* : ‘The Five ‘M’s,’ the fivefold cardinal doctrine of Tantra discipline, consisting Māṃsa, Matsya, Madya, Mudrā, Maithuna (q.v.).
- Māṃsa* : ‘Meat’, the use of meat as one of the Makāra (q.v.).
- Maṇḍala* : mystic circle, a diagram mapping mystic forces in their inter-relationship.
- Māndhātā* : a legendary king of former times.
- Manu-smṛti* : ‘‘Manu’s Ordinances’’, the foremost of Hindu law-books, named after the legendary Manu, progenitor of human race.
- Māra* : in Buddhism, the evil genius of passion, ‘Destroyer’.
- Matsya* : ‘Fish’, the use of fish, as one of the Makāra (q.v.).
- Mauneya* : the path of a Muni (q.v.); Muni-hood.
- Maurya period* : cultural epoch of Indian history, c. 325 BC-200 BC.
- Māyā* : phenomenal Illusion; in Vedānta thought, this world is Māyā or Illusion; sometimes, n. for goddess Nature signifying the female power or Creatrix with respect to the pretermundane Brahman as male.
- Medieval period* : in Indian history, the period of half a millennium after 700 AD, divided into ‘Early’ : 700-900 and ‘Late’ : 900-1200 AD.
- Meru-prāsāda* : a temple building type which is lauded as the best of all styles and so named after the mythical mount Meru.
- Mithuna* : a pair, a couple of male and female.
- Mokṣa* : redemption, the ultimate release or salvation.
- Mudrā* : bodily posture or mental attitude; in Yoga and Tantra, an awakened state of being realised through the performance of an Āsana (q.v.) in tune with the control-of-breath (*prāṇāyāma*); in Tantric rites, symbol-name of the female partner as embodying a form of the Goddess; ‘Attitude’, as one of the Makāra (q.v.).
- Mughal painting* : the school of Indian painting under the Imperial Mughal court, during the 16th cent. to the middle of the 19th cent. AD.
- Muni* : an ecstatic, or inspired ascetic.
- Nāga* : snake-divinity.
- Nāgī* : female Nāga (q.v.) or serpent-goddess.
- Nārāyaṇa* : epithet of Viṣṇu (q.v.) referring to him as the ultimate stay of the primordial waters of creation.
- Nārī-bandha* : temple wall-fascia with female figures.
- Nārī-latā* : the miraculous creeper bearing women.
- Nātha Siddha, Natha Yogī* : a perfected ascetic member belonging to a Śaivite sect of Tantra-Yoga keeping Nātha-ending names.
- Nāyikā* : the heroine, a noble lady; in Tantra, a female partner representing a form of the Goddess.
- Nidhana* : the concluding rite or finale of a Sāman (q.v.).
- Nirvāṇa* : ‘extinction’, the ultimate Release; in Buddhism, the state of absolute extinction of all desires and passions that constitute individual being.

- Om* : the trilateral (composed of *a*, *u*, *m*) syllable or name for the Absolute.
- Pahari painting* : the school or local schools of Indian painting under the princely states in the Panjab Himalayas, during the 17th cent. to the 19th cent. AD.
- Pañca-makāra* : see Makāra.
- Pañca-tattva* : 'The Five Essences', i.e., Makāra (q.v.).
- Pāṇigrahaṇa* : the ceremony of taking a girl in marriage.
- Parama Śiva* : Absolute Unity as Śiva, in Kashmir Śaivism (q.v.).
- Pārvatī* : the Goddess, 'Mountain-goddess', as wife of Śiva (q.v.).
- Prajāpati* : Lord-of-creatures, the Creator.
- Prajñā* : 'Knowledge', symbol-name for the female element, in Buddhist Tantra.
- Prakṛti* : 'Nature', the female principle; the ultimate Nature that is the primary cause or 'womb' of this creation; n. for the personified creative energy or Śakti (q.v.) of the god.
- Prastāva* : the introduction of a Sāman (q.v.).
- Pratihāra* : (1) n. of particular syllables in a Sāman (q.v.); (2) door-keeper.
- Purāṇa* : class of Skt. encyclopedic texts on ancient lores. Eighteen are the main, e.g., *Agni Purāṇa*, *Liṅga Purāṇa*, *Matsya Purāṇa*. The Jains also compiled their Purāṇas.
- Pūrṇa-ghaṭa* : the Vase-of-Plenty.
- Puruṣa* : male person; the male element in the creative process; the Supreme Person.
- Puruṣārtha* : Indian social theory of Human Goals, having Artha, Kāma and Dharma (q.v.) as the first three objectives of life with Mokṣa or Salvation as the fourth and final.
- Rādhā* : female counterpart or Śakti (q.v.) of Kṛṣṇa (q.v.); the word being derived from 'rādh' to propitiate is conceived as an embodiment of the ardent love-worship to the Lord.
- Rāga* : (1) love, sentiment; (2) musical melody, figuratively conceived as male.
- Rāga-caryā* : 'the conduct of passion.'
- Rāgamālā* : series, literally 'garland', of musical melodies, rendered in painting according to their conventionalised visual image.
- Rāgini* : musical melody, figuratively conceived as female.
- Rajasthani painting* : the school or schools of painting in Rajasthan during the 15th cent. to the 19th cent. AD.
- Rajput painting* : collective name for the Rajasthani and Pahari (q.v.) schools of painting as they flourished mostly under the patronage of Rajput princely states.
- Rāmāyaṇa* : "Rāma's story", the first Skt. epic-poem by sage Vālmiki.
- Rāsa dance* : the sportive dance of Kṛṣṇa (q.v.) with the cowherdesses. This brings out so naive an illustration of the privileged multiple souls as women in perennially blissful union of their ultimate lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Person.

*Rāsa-maṇḍala* : dance-circle of Rāsa (q.v.).

*Rāśi* : sign of the zodiac.

*Rati* : Amorous Pleasure, personified as wife of love-god Kāma (q.v.).

*Rgveda* : the first and the foremost of the Indian scriptures called Veda (q.v.) preserved by the Brahmins composed in the most archaic form of Skt.

*Rk* : sacred verse, particularly of the *Rgveda* (q.v.).

*Rṣabhanātha* : the first Tirthaṅkara (q.v.), also called Ādinātha, the First Master.

*Rśyaśṛṅga* : 'Stag-horned', n. of a legendary sage, see Ill. 221.

*Sādhana*, *Sādhana* : spiritual effort for fulfilling the realisation of a goal.

*Sahaja* or *Sahajī School* : a post-Caitanya (q.v.) Kṛṣṇaite Buddhistic sect of Tantric inspiration believing in the priority of sexual techniques as the most natural (*sahaja*) path to realise Sahaja, the Ultimate Innate Nature.

*Śakti* : the female principle or Energy of the god; n. for the Great Goddess.

*Sālabhañjikā* : female posing herself in embrace of a tree; caryatid figure.

*Sāman* : hymn or ritual chant of the *Sāmaveda* (q.v.).

*Sāmaveda* : "Veda of chants", one of the four Vedas (q.v.).

*Sarasvatī* : Goddess of Wisdom and Music, regarded as wife of Brahmā (q.v.).

*Śāsana-devatā* : ancillary or attendant divinity.

*Śāstra* : systematised knowledge; treatise of a scientific or religious system.

*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* : see Brāhmaṇa.

*Savitar* : Vedic Sun god.

*Sāvitrī* : solar energy personified as female.

*Śeṣaśāyī* : epithet of Viṣṇu (q.v.) describing his sleep on the cosmic Serpent Śeṣa 'Remainder'.

*Seven Mortal Buddhas* : see Buddha.

*Siddha* : (1) adept of Yoga; (2) class of semi-divine beings endowed with supernatural faculties.

*Siddhāṅganā* : Siddha (q.v.) woman.

*Siddhārtha* : personal n. of the historical Buddha (q.v.) as prince.

*Siddhi* : 'accomplishment', the acquisition of a supernatural power or faculty; the supernatural power or powers so acquired.

*Śilpa* : architecture; arts.

*Śilpa-śāstra* : science of architecture.

*Śilpa texts* : Skt. treatises on architecture.

*Sinivālī* : Vedic lunar goddess presiding over childbirth.

*Śiva* : one of the principal gods of Hinduism.

*Soma* : particular beverage of Vedic gods.

*Śrī-cakra*, *Śrī-yantra* : particular diagram dedicated to the Goddess.

*Śrī-Lakṣmī* : Goddess of Beauty and Auspiciousness, regarded as wife of Viṣṇu (q.v.).

*Śṛṅgāra* : erotic sentiment.

*Strī* : woman.

*Stūpa* : tope, particular kind of tumular monument enshrining sacred relics in its dome erected for common worship by the Buddhist.

*Śuṅga period* : cultural epoch of Indian history, covering the 2nd and the 1st cent. BC.

*Suparṇa* : (1) in Vedic myths, a deified solar bird; (2) mythical beings having siren-like body, partly human, partly bird.

*Suparṇī* : female Suparṇa (q.v.).

*Sūtra literature* : the later Vedic works written in aphoristic style on rituals, law, sacraments, etc.

*Tantra* : particular esoteric creed, original to India, which explores all cosmic knowledge through human body; class of works teaching Tantric knowledge and formularies.

*Triple Objective* : see Puruṣārtha.

*Tvaṣṭar* : Vedic artificer-god.

*Udgītha* : chanting of a Sāman (q.v.).

*Upaniṣad* : class of later Vedic writings, more than a hundred in number, summarising esoteric teachings about man in relation to the universe. Only 13 Upaniṣads are of pre-Buddhist antiquity, e.g. the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, *Jaiminiya Upaniṣad* (-*Brāhmaṇa*), *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad*, *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*.

*Upāya* : 'Means', in Buddhist Tantra, symbol-name for the male element.

*Uttarakuru* : the Elysian land or earthly paradise of Indian myths.

*Vaijayanta* : n. of the palace of Indra, the king of gods.

*Vājapeya* : 'Strength-drink', n. of a great Vedic sacrifice.

*Vāk* : principle of Speech, sometimes personified as goddess.

*Vāmācāra* : 'the left-hand conduct,' i.e. the sexual Tantra rituals followed by the worshippers of Śakti (q.v.).

*Vāmadevya* : n. of particular Sāman (q.v.) hymns and associated rites.

*Varuṇa* : Vedic god presiding over cosmic order and the waters.

*Varuṇānī* : wife of god Varuṇa (q.v.).

*Vātsyāyana* : the reputed Brahmin teacher on erotics, author of the famous *Kāmasūtra*, c. 2nd cent. AD.

*Vāyu* : Vedic god of Wind.

*Veda* : scriptures of knowledge, the most ancient and celebrated anthologies of sacred hymns and legends preserved by the Brahmins, composed in archaic forms of the Skt. language, assigned to a period between 4000 BC and 2500 BC, or 1400 BC and 1000 BC.

*Vedānta* : 'culmination of the Veda,' n. of an orthodox system of Hindu philosophy, its chief doctrine, as expounded by Śaṅkarācārya (c. 800 AD) is that of Non-dual Reality called Brahman, all multiform being mere illusionistic ignorance.

*Vidyādhara* : class of semi-divine beings, so called as they carry a 'vidyā' or attribute of an art in their hand.



- Vidyādhari* : Vidyādhara (q.v.) woman.
- Vidyāpati* : a great poet of Mithila, Bihar, early fifteenth century, famous for his vernacular songs on the celestial love-play of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā (q.v.), and many other works.
- Vihāra* : Buddhist monastery.
- Viṇā* : Indian lute.
- Vira* : hero; Tantric adept.
- Vira-mandira* : temple of Tantric adepts, i.e. constructed according to Tantra knowledge.
- Virāj* : Vedic n. of the creative female principle next to Absolute Puruṣa (q.v.).
- Viṣṇu* : one of the principal gods of Hinduism.
- Vṛkṣakā* : tree-nymph or dryad.
- Yab-yum* : (Tibetan) the god in union with his female power.
- Yajña* : sacrifice, sacrificial rite.
- Yājñavalkya* : 'whose bark-garment is the sacrifice,' n. of a celebrated sage-teacher frequently quoted as an authority in later Vedic texts.
- Yakṣa* : class of tutelary deities of popular worship.
- Yakṣī, Yakṣiṇī* : female Yakṣa (q.v.).
- Yama-Yamī* : mythical twin-born male and female regarded as forming the first sexual couple.
- Yantra* : a diagrammatic symbol; an instrument for mystic worship.
- Yāska* : reputed Vedic exegetist, author of the *Nirukta*, c. 6th cent. BC.
- Yoga* : 'union'; philosophy and system of physical and mental training by undergoing which the individual enters in tune and finally in complete union with the universal.
- Yogī, Yogin* : one who has attained Yoga (q.v.).
- Yoginī* : n. for Śakti (q.v.); in Tantric sexual rites, the female partner embodying a form of the Goddess.
- Yoni* : the female genital.
- Yugala, Yugalika* : pair of man and woman.
- Yuganaddha* : 'united as one,' the god in union with his female power.

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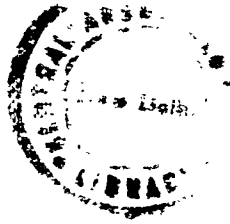
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45	37	Śālabhañjikā	Śāñlabhañjikā
77	31	<i>Hevajra Tantra</i>	<i>Havajra Tantra</i>
80	3	again, She	again. She
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## PLATES







1. *A pair of kissing faces.*
2. *Man-woman Mithuna.*





5

3-4. See colour plates.

5. Sky-father and Earth-mother recumbent  
vis-a-vis.

6. Great Nude Earth Goddess with a lotus-head<sup>d</sup> posing  
in the act of creation.

7. "Let them be wed again". Couple in embrace.



6



7



8

8. *"In the beginning this creation was as large as a woman and a man closely embraced".*

9. *Lotus-headed Nude Goddess with her legs apart.*

9





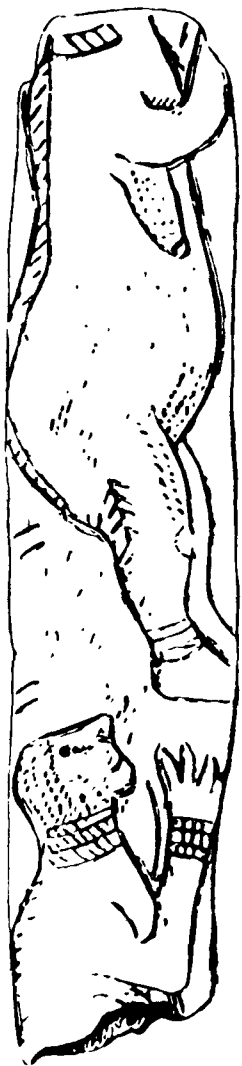
10

10. *Nude male torso.*



11

11. *Squatting Femininity.*



12



13

12. *A man pursuing a woman.*

13. *Yoni, Mother-womb.*



14

14. *Mother-goddess.*



15

15. *He of the Golden Phallus.*

16. *Devī as Śrī-Lakṣmī, the Goddess of Beauty and Abundance.*



16



17



19

- 17. *Devi.*
- 18. *Devi as Sarasvati, Goddess of Eloquence and Wisdom.*
- 19. *Androgynous effigy*



20



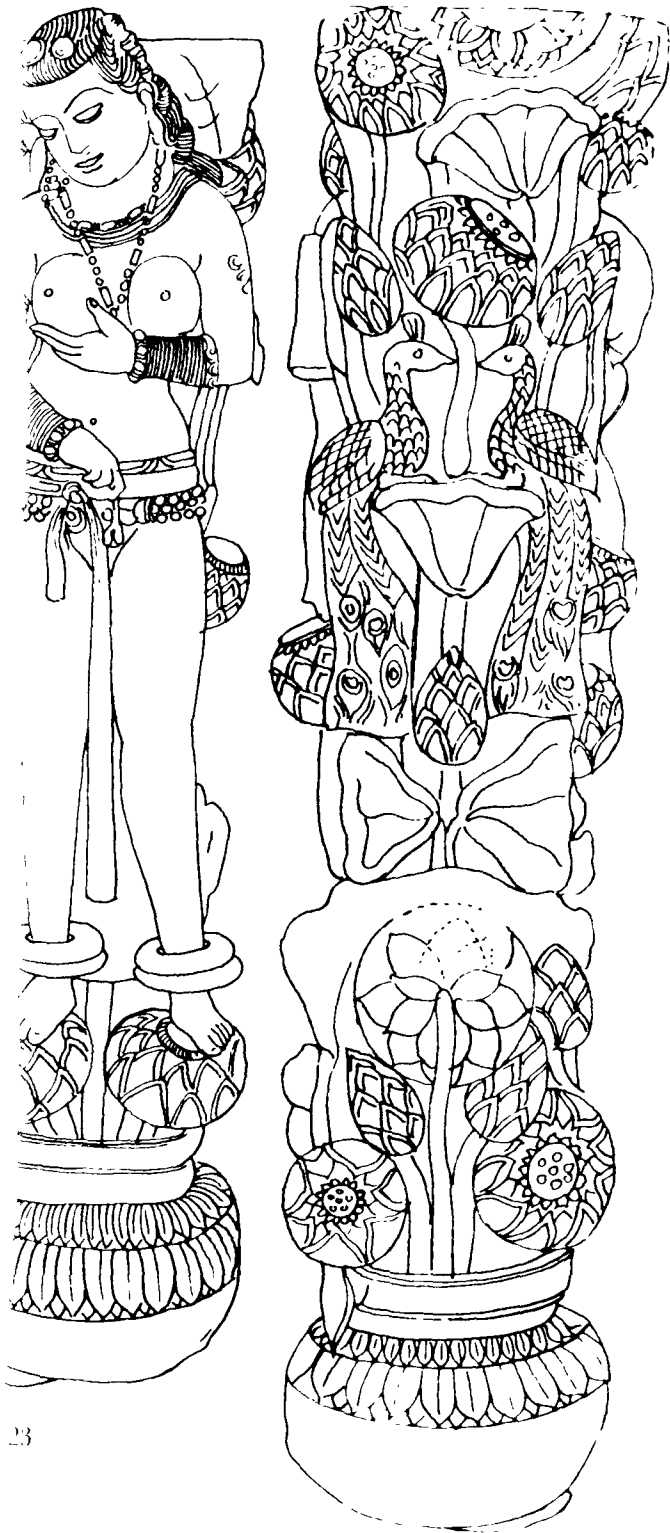
20. *Ardhanarishvara or Half-man  
Half-woman form of the Great God Śiva.*

21. *See colour plates.*

22. *Hamsa Mithunas poised on lotus  
sprays of the Vase-of-Plenty.*



22



23

23. *Front: Śrī-Lakṣmī, Goddess of Beauty and Abundance in the milk-bestowing posture. Back: Hamsa Mithunas poised on lotus sprays rising from the Vase-of-Plenty.*



25

24. *See colour plates.*

25. *Seated Yugalika pair under a Kalpa tree.*



26

26. *Yugalika pair seated under a Kalpa tree.*

27. *Emperor Mandhata in his victorious camp of Uttarakuru.*

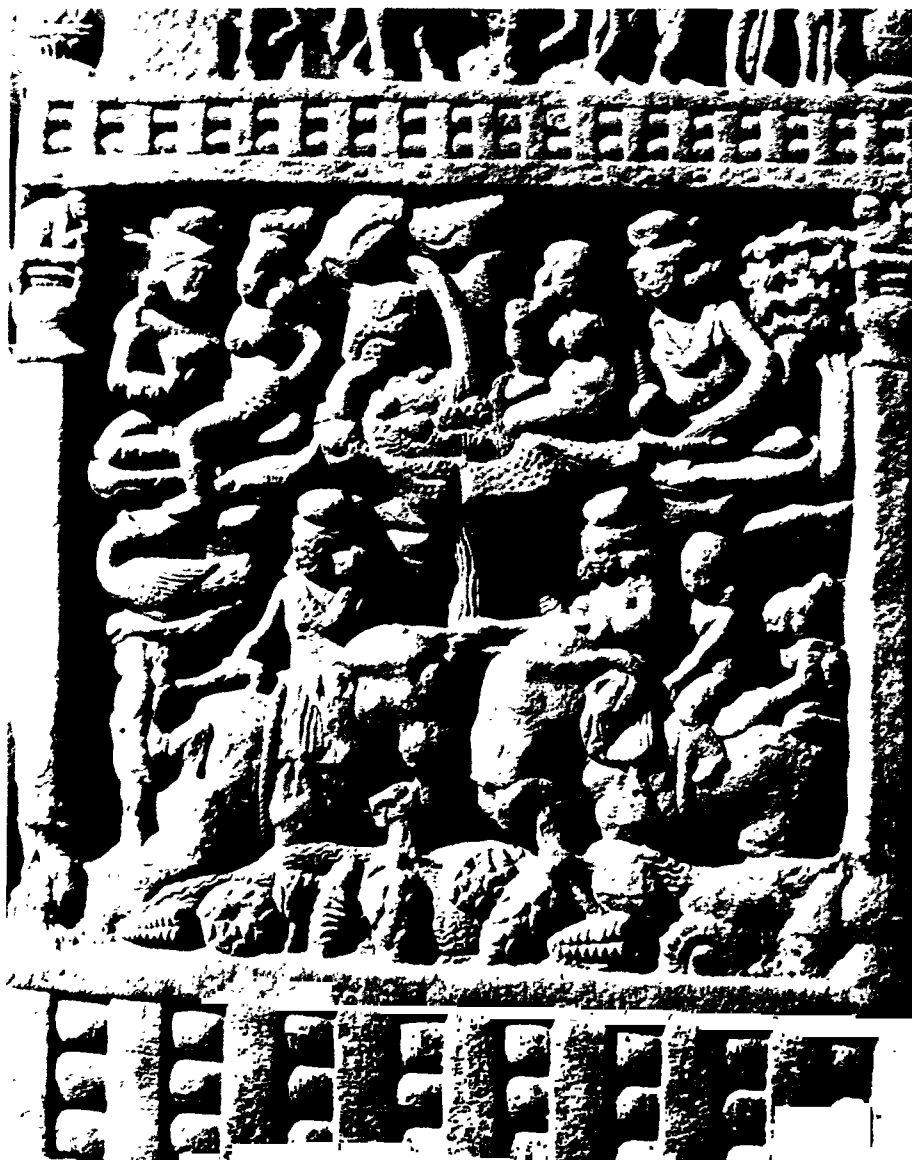


27



28

28. *In Uttarakuru, Mithunas take their birth from the branches of Kalpa tree.*



29. *Pleasures of Mithuna life in Uttarakuru.*

29



30. Detail of Ill. 29.

31. Detail of Ill. 29.

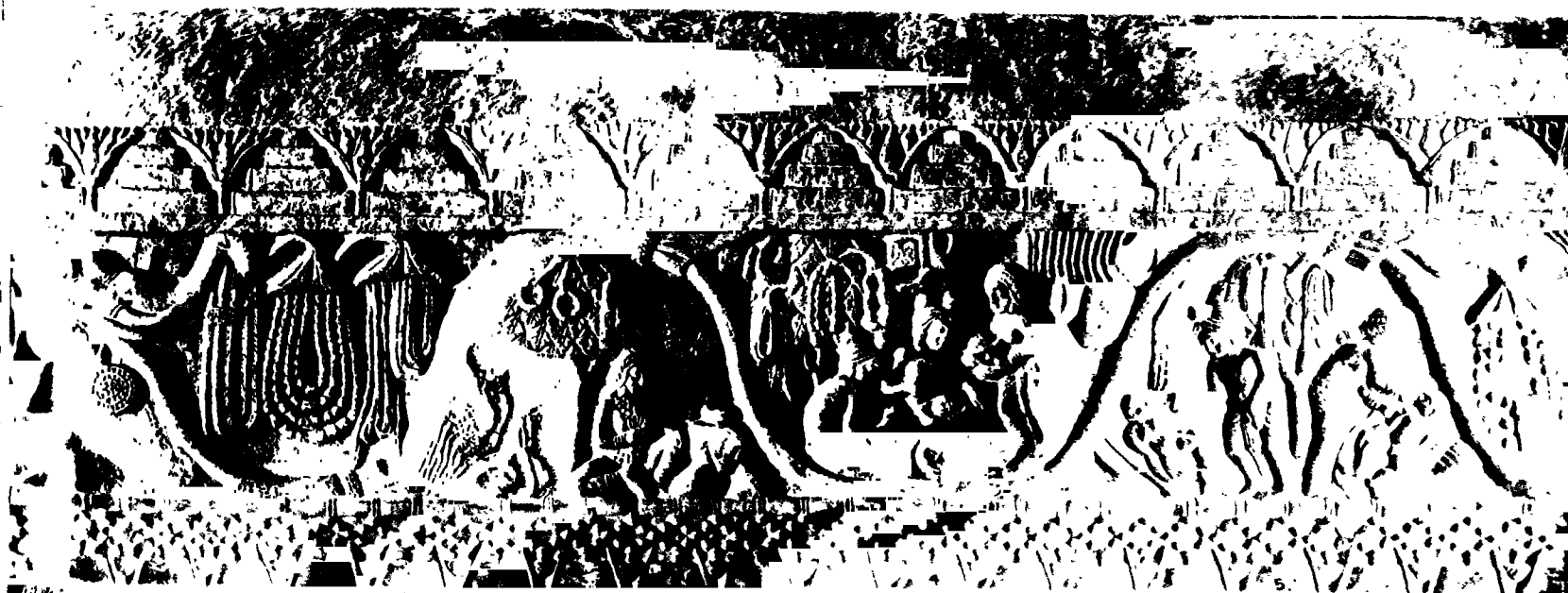
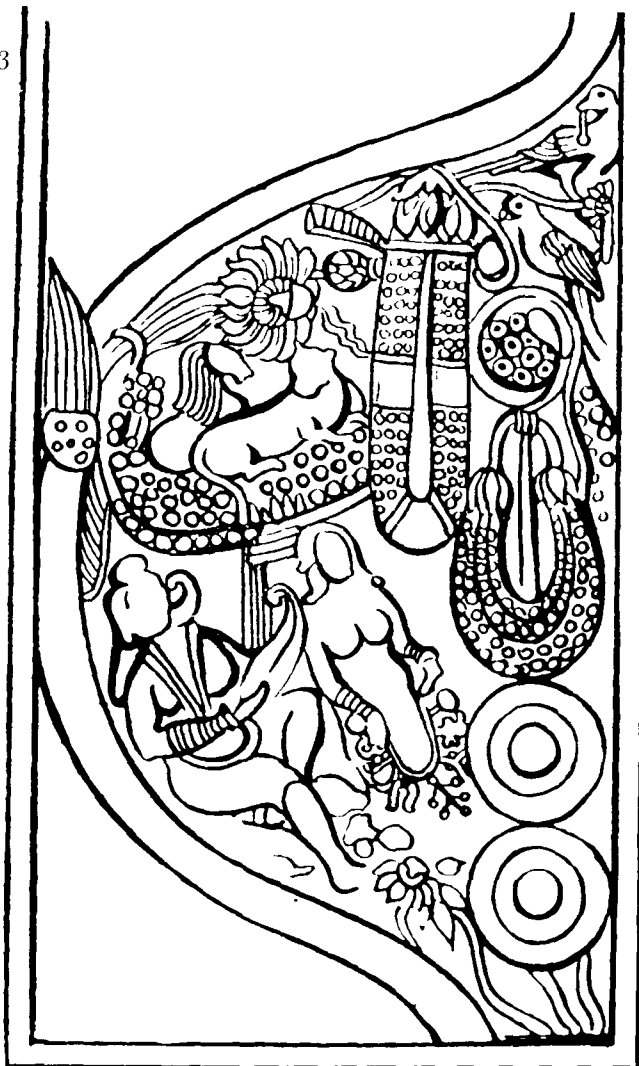
32. Mithuna life in the Elysian land of Uttarakuru.

33. A couple engaged in music amidst gifts from Wishing trees and creepers.

34. Portion from coping of railing.

35. Couple enjoying music and dance in arboreal retreat.







36

36. *Amorous pair on a couch.*



37

37. *Amorous Mithuna. The female carries a lute while the male its shell-plectron.*



38

38. *Amorous couple.*



39

40

39. *Mithuna standing under an Aśoka tree.  
The embarrassed male wooes his bashful mistress  
by offering her a drink.*
40. (i) *Mithuna standing under an Aśoka tree.  
The annoyed female turned to the side is  
being appeased by the male who touches his  
ears in apology.*  
(ii) *Standing female, part of another amorous group.*







41



42



41. *Mithunas as carriers of the Great Garland.*

42. *Couple.*

43. *Standing Mithuna under a tree.*

44. *Auspicious Mithuna under a tree.*





45



46

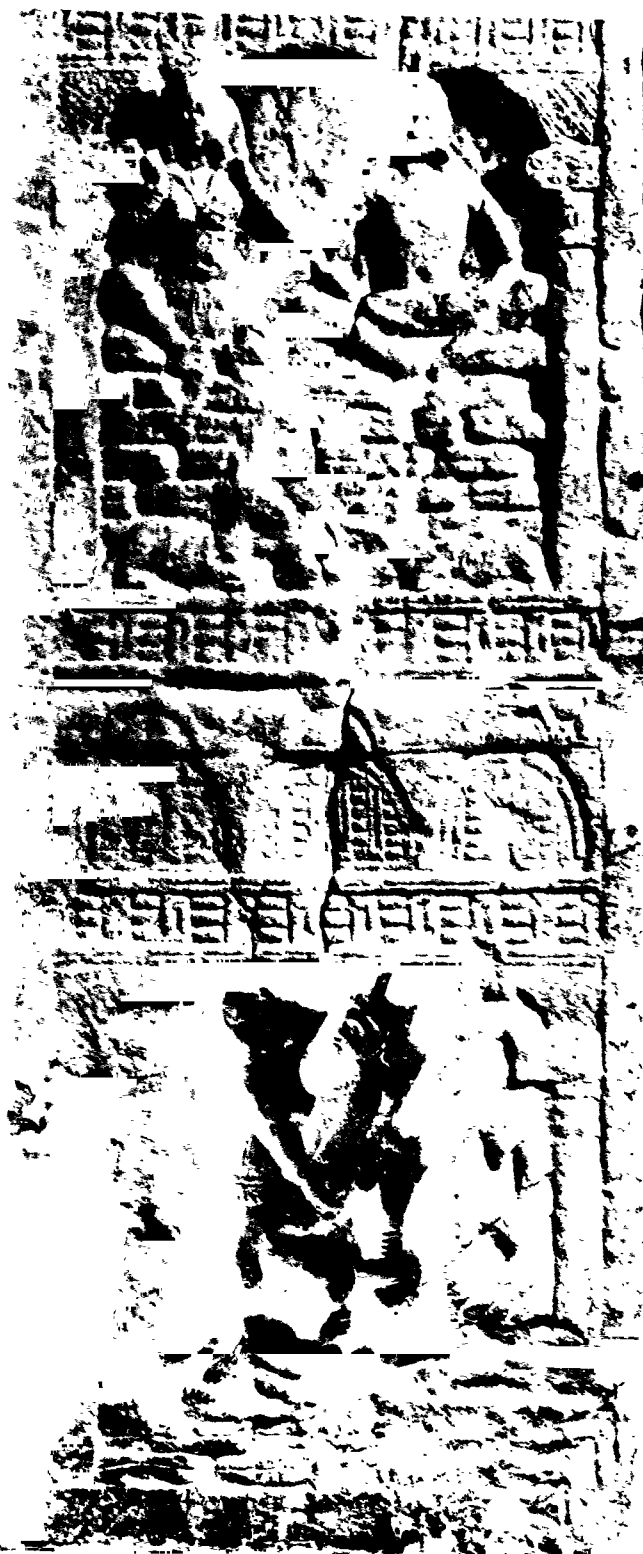
45. *Nārī-latā*, Wishing Creeper producing maidens  
46. Detail of Ill. 45.



17

17. *Amorous Mithuna.*

18. *Above: Seated male and female.  
Below: Copulation. The scenes are identified to  
represent the legend of Rāyaśringa.*



18

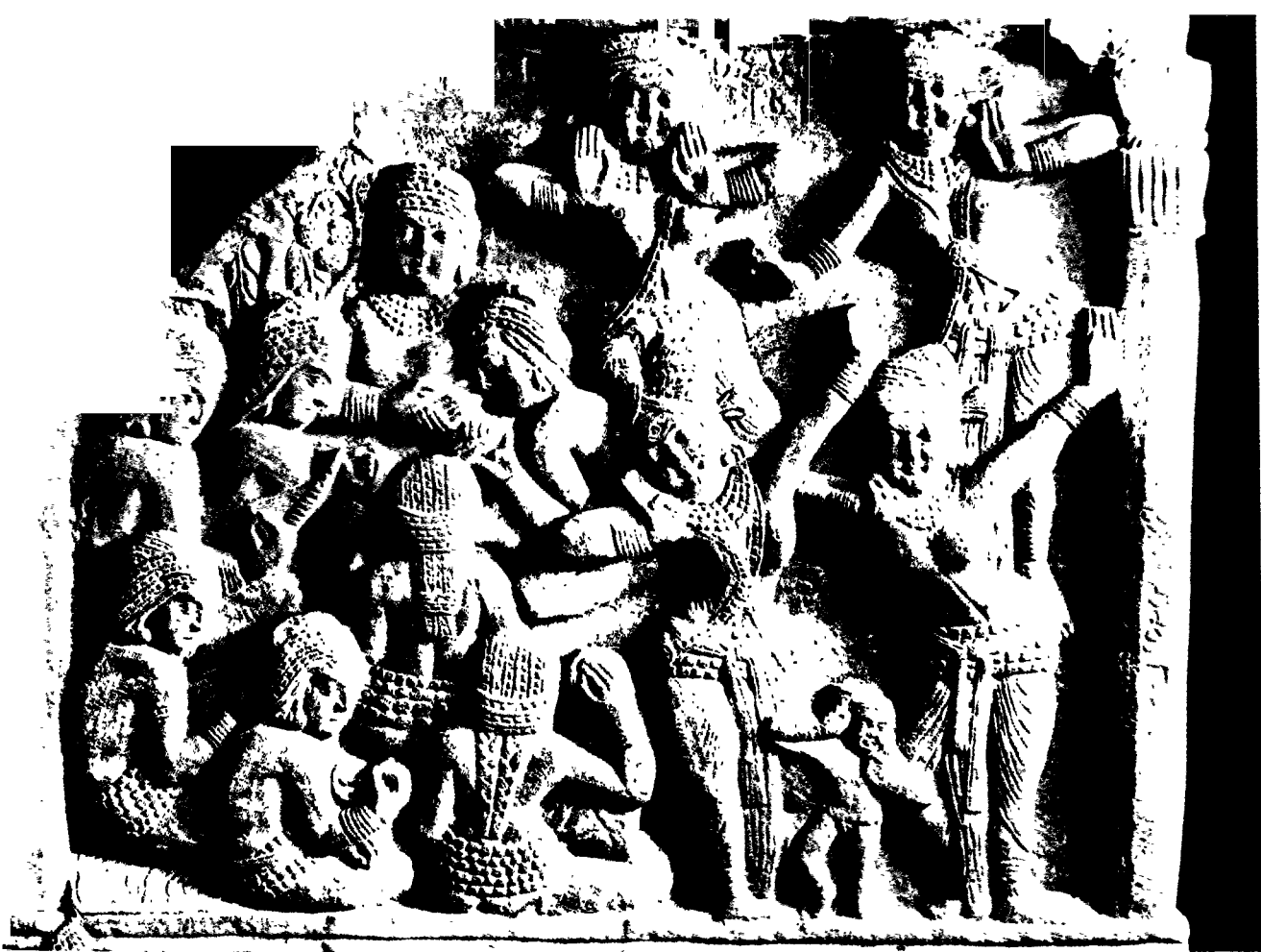
49 *Royal couple.*

50 *Śiva and Pārvatī.*

19

50





51



52

51. *The Apsarases, celestial danseuses, in music and dance.*

52. *Music and dance in the harem.*

53. *Śiva and Pārvatī.*  
54. *Ardhanārīśvara.*



53

54





55. *Vishnu and Lakshmi.*

56. *Boar Incarnation  
caressing Goddess Earth.*

55



56





57

57 *Impassive god Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu resting in his Yoga Sleep  
on the World Serpent "Remainder" (Sesai) or "Endless"  
(Ananta)*





59

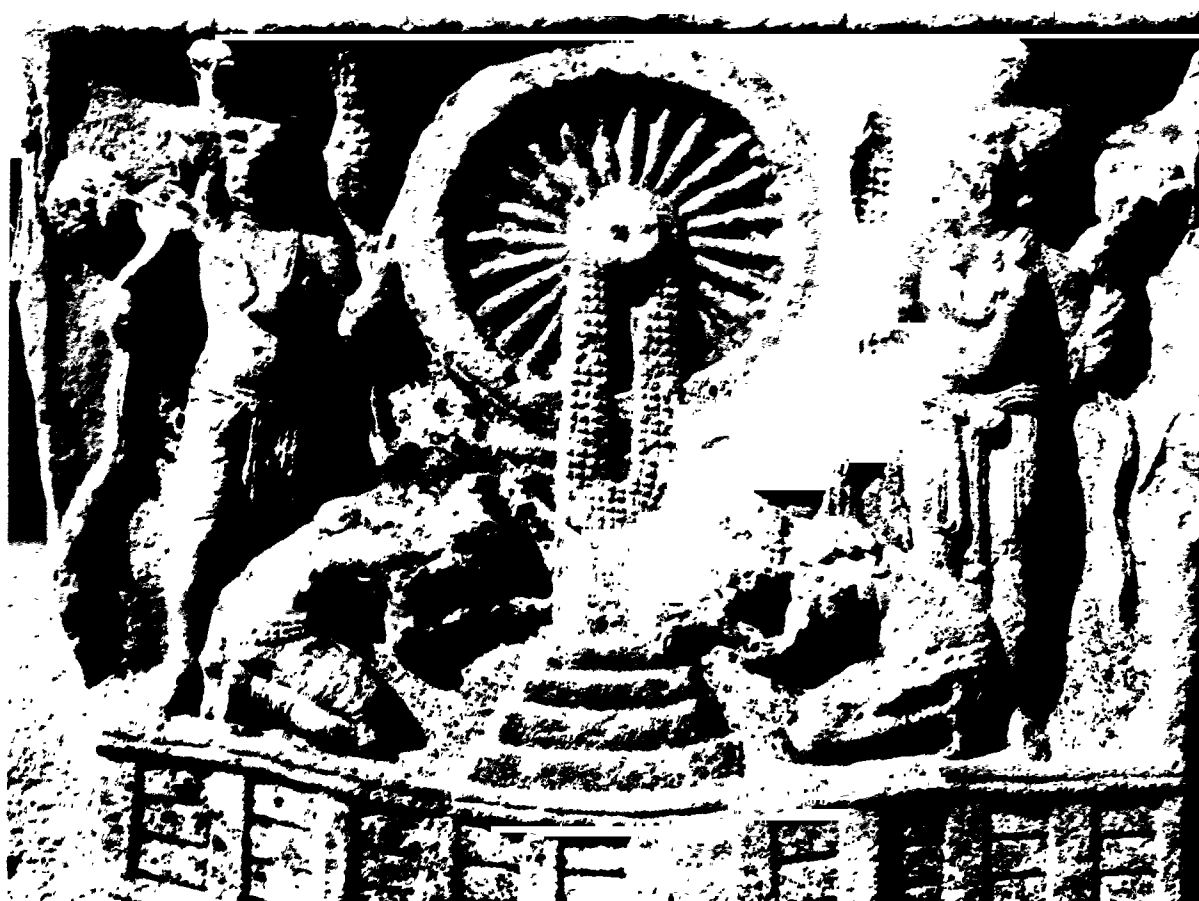


60



61

59. *Creator god Brahmā seated in part embrace with his consort Sarasvatī.*  
 60. *Gaṇapati seated with his pair.*  
 61. *Kubera with his consort Hārītī.*  
 62-63 *See colour plates.*  
 64. *Devotee couple at a sacred tree.*  
 65. *Standing donor couple.*  
 66. *Donor couple in dancing posture.*





73

73. *Mithuna pairs.*

74. *A couple engaged in music and dancing.*

75. *Amorous couple.*

76. *Amorous Mithuna in balcony.*



74



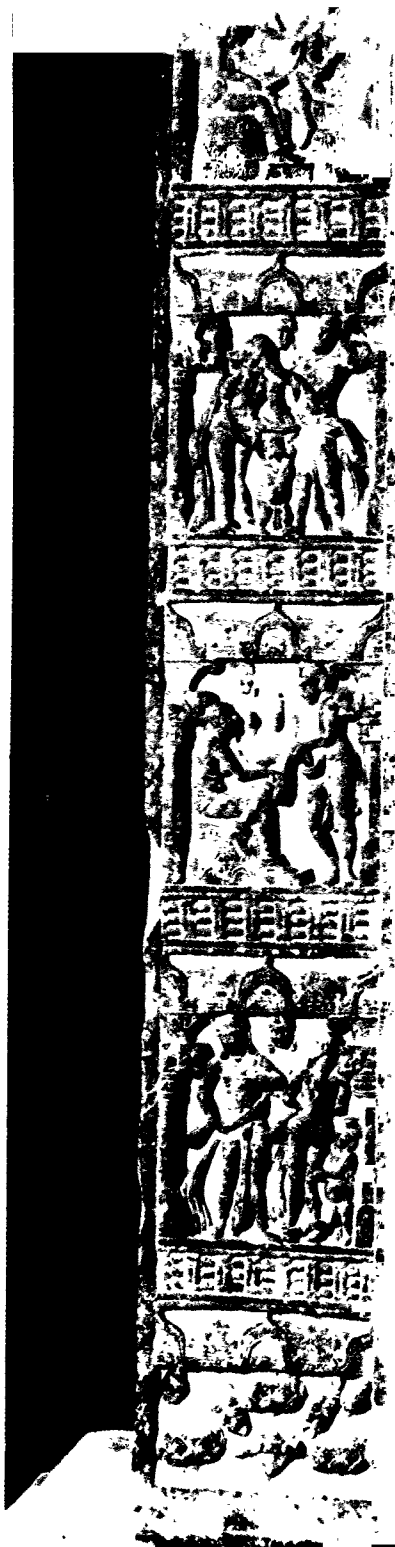
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77-78. *Scenes from amorous pastimes of a young loving couple, identified as showing palace life of Buddha's brother Nanda with his wife Sundari.*

79. *Mithuna figures alternating with panels showing Buddhist legends.*



75

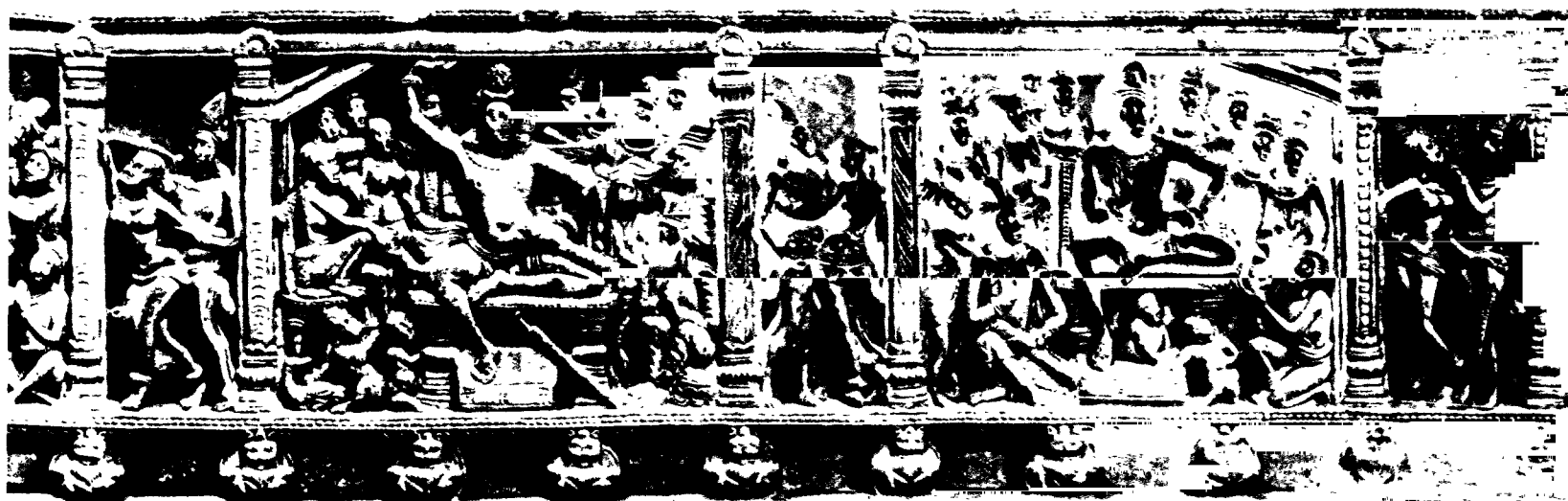


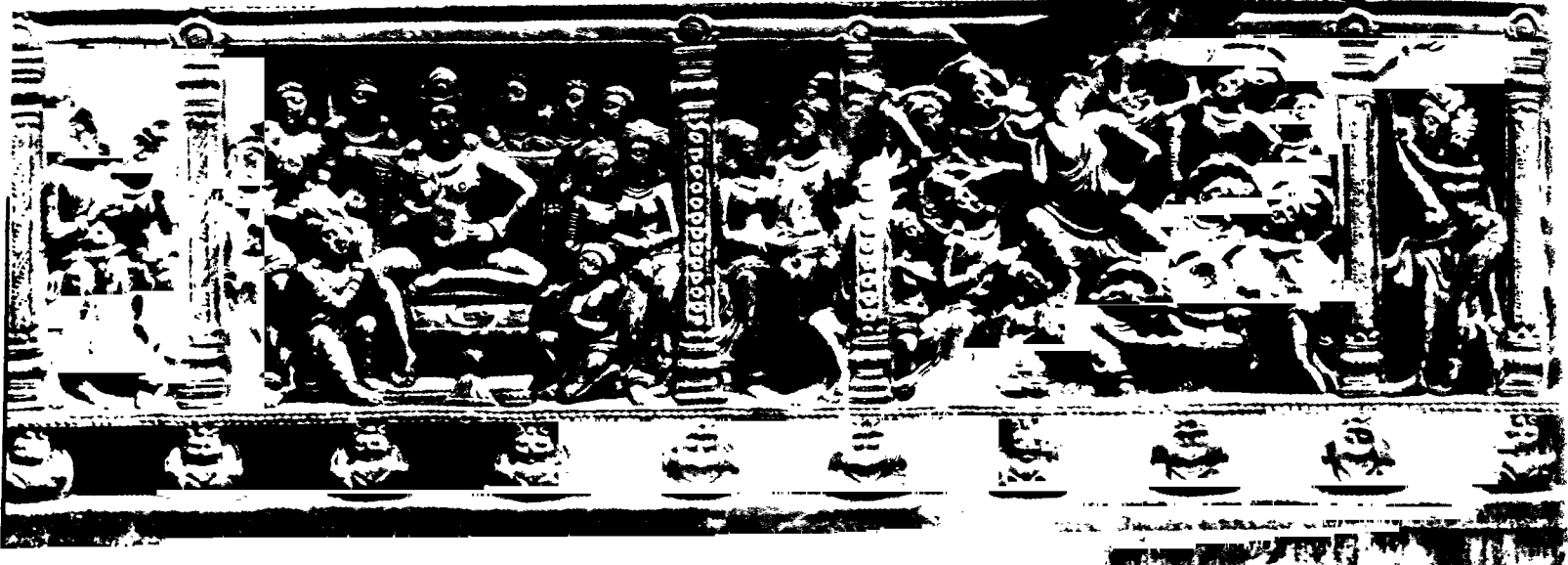
77



78

79







82

- 80. *Mithuna figures alternating with panels showing Buddhist legends.*
- 81. *Amorous couple.*
- 82. *Amorous couple.*
- 83. *A loving couple.*



83

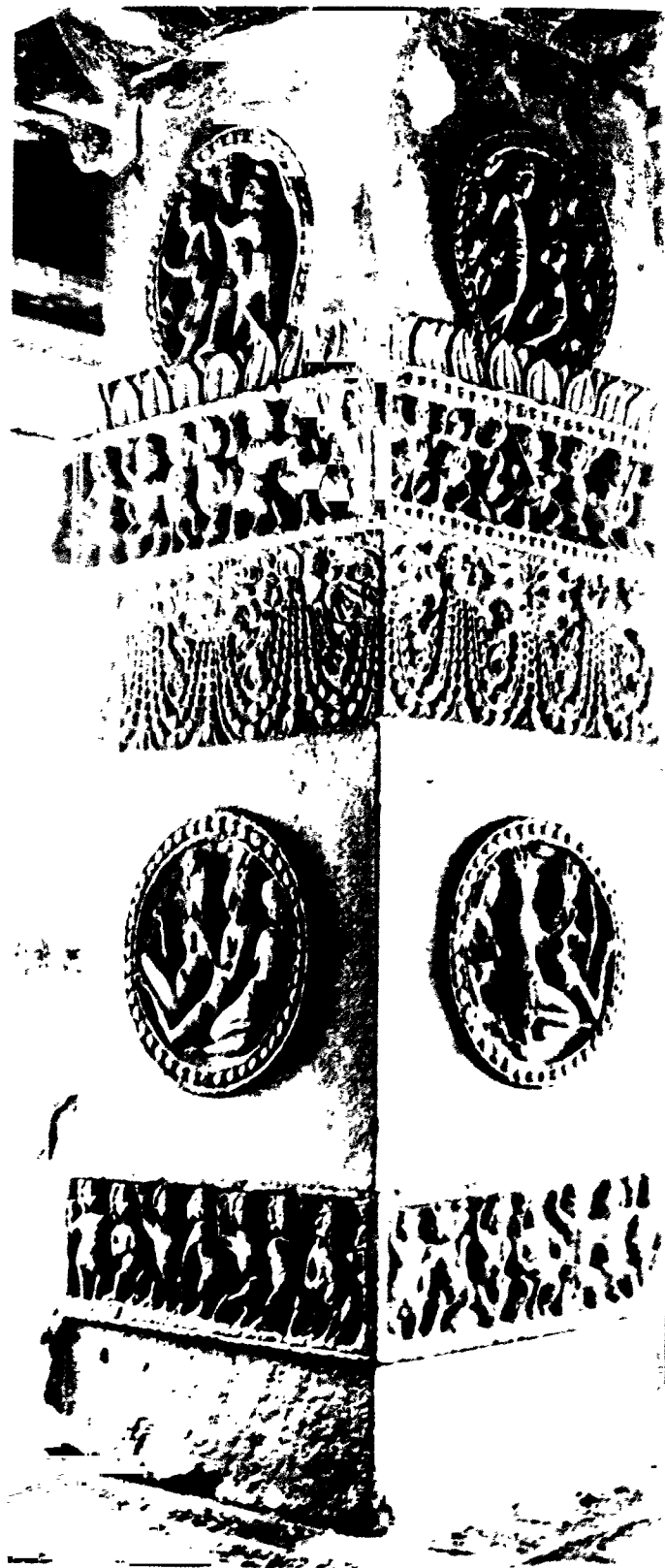




84

84. *Loving couples on pillar.*

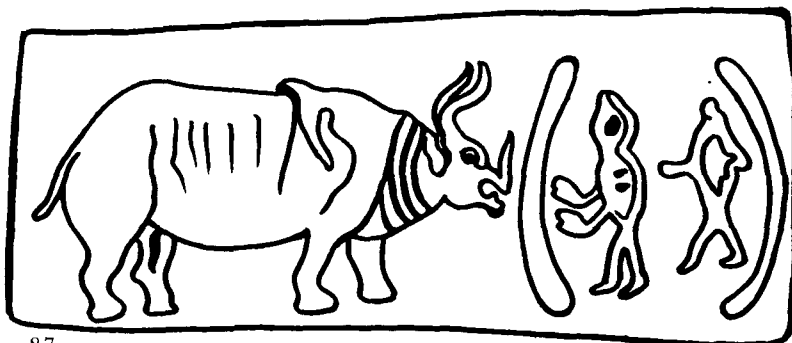
85. *Loving Mithunas in roundels on pillar.*



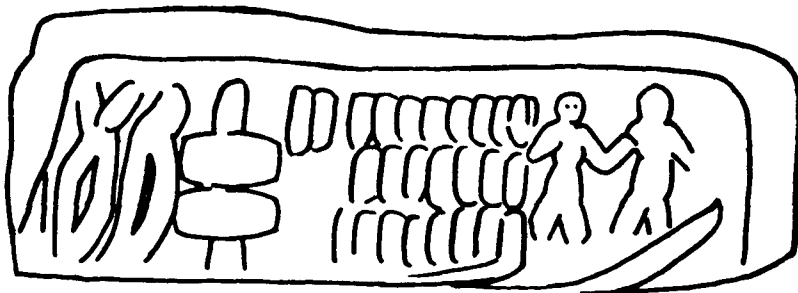
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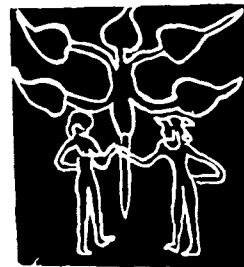
86



87



88



89

86. Nudes.

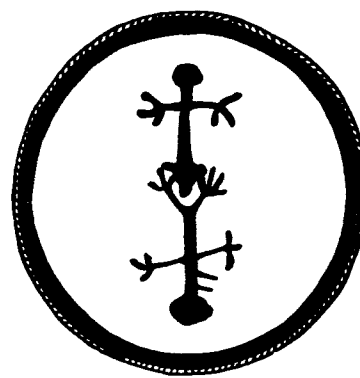
87. Mithuna as motif of human generation. Man and Woman are protected by the charm of a pair of horns against formidable rhinoceros.

88. Man and Woman and other symbols.

89. Male and female flanking a tree.



90



91



92

90. *Man and Woman. (i) Imalikhoh Cave and (ii) Monteroza Cave.*

91. *Cohabiting couple.*

92. *Man-Woman Mithuna and other symbols.*

93. *Scenes of cultic rituals dedicated to the Nude Goddess.*



93



94. A couple performing dance and drink rituals dedicated to the Nude Goddess.

95. Nude Mithuna.

96. Goddess Lakṣmī with human and animal couples.



94



95

96



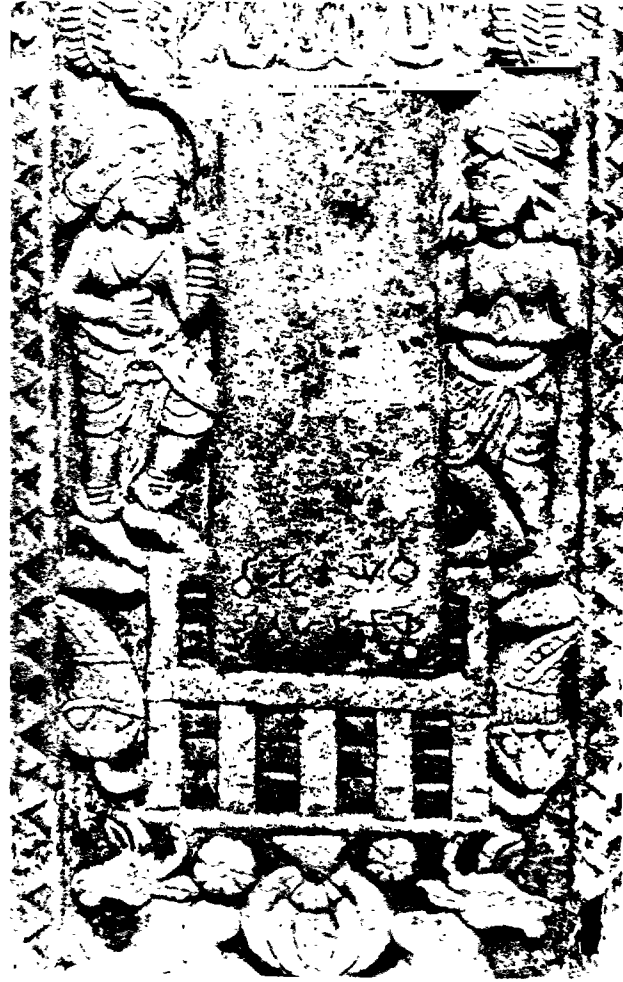
97

97. *Man and Woman.*



98

98. *Sacred Tree and human and crane Mithunas.*



100



101

99. Wheel-topped pillar and a devotee couple.  
 100. Sacred pillar and human and bull Mithunas.  
 101. Auspicious Mithuna.



102

102. *Man and woman riding on a pair of addorsed goats.*

103. *Elephant-riding couples.*

104. *Frieze showing amorous Mithunas.*

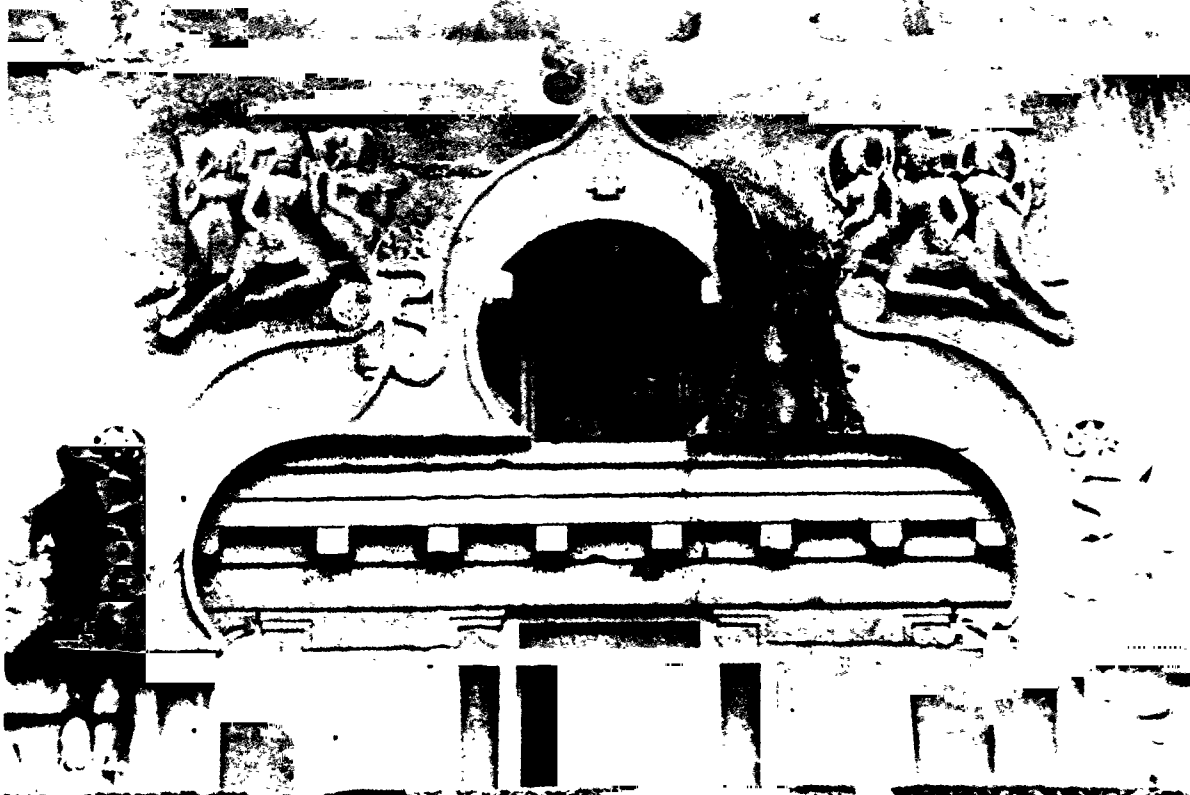
105. *Friezes showing amorous Mithunas.*



103



104



105

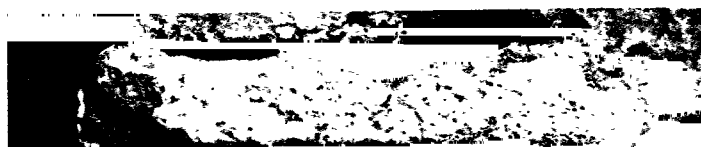






106

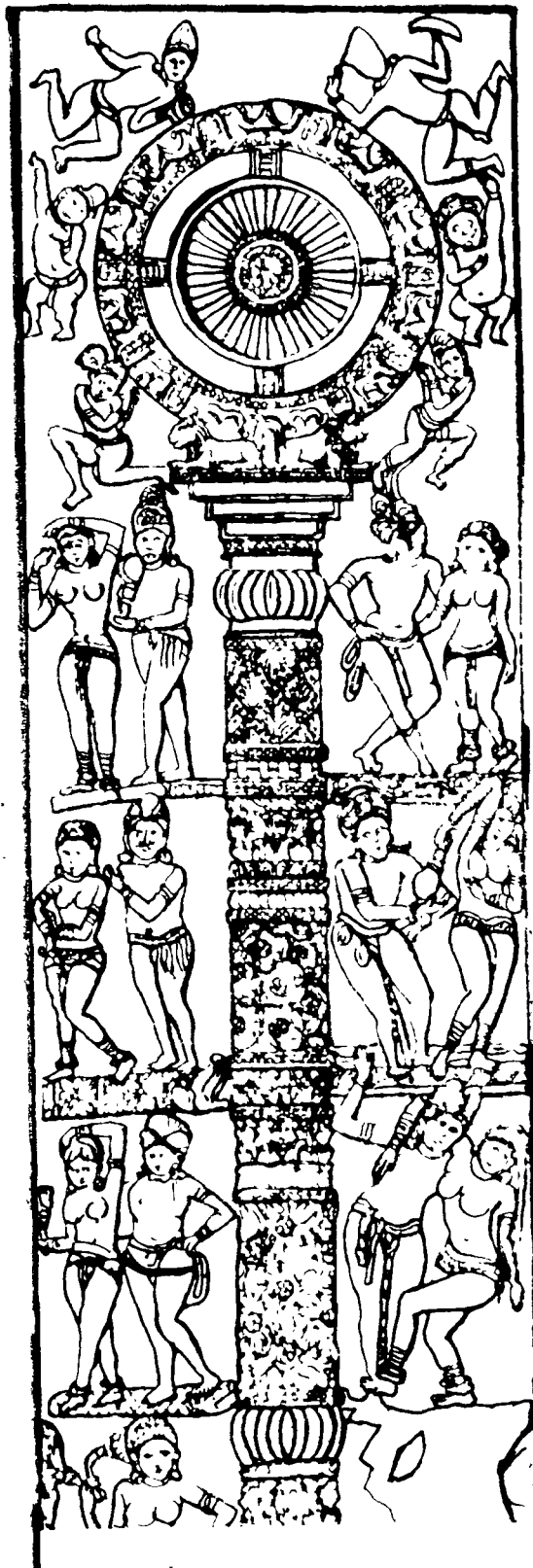
106. *Part of uppermost frieze. Detail of Ill. 105.*  
 107. *Standing Mithuna.*





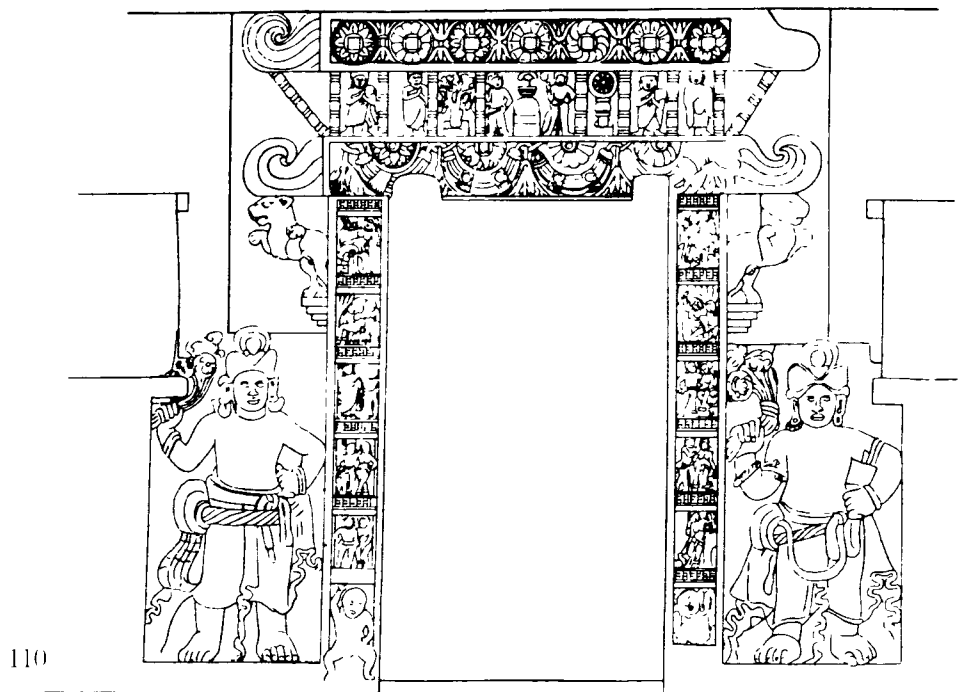
108

108. Symbolical pillar flanked by series of Mithunas on either side.

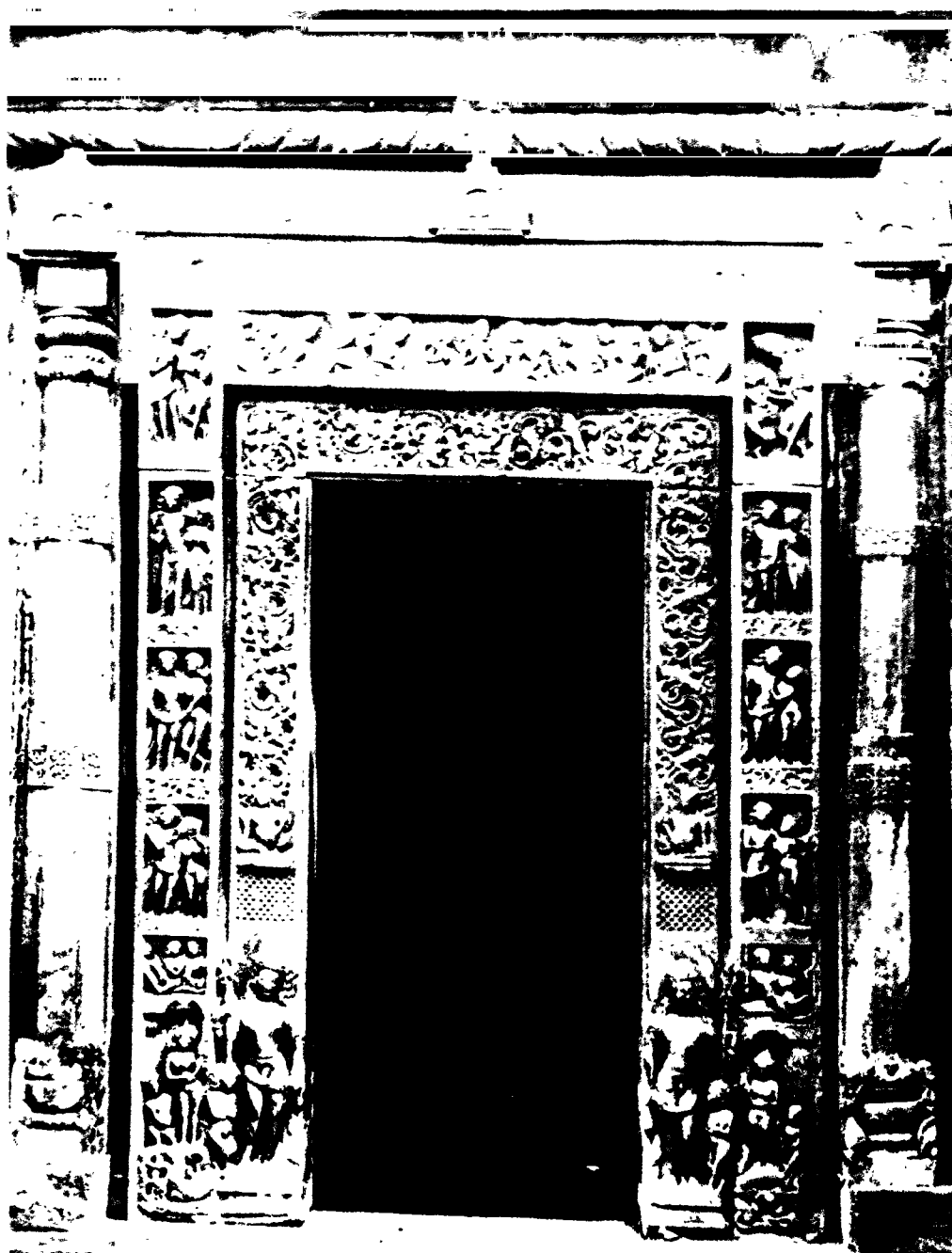


109

109. Symbolical pillar flanked by series of Mithunas on either side.



110

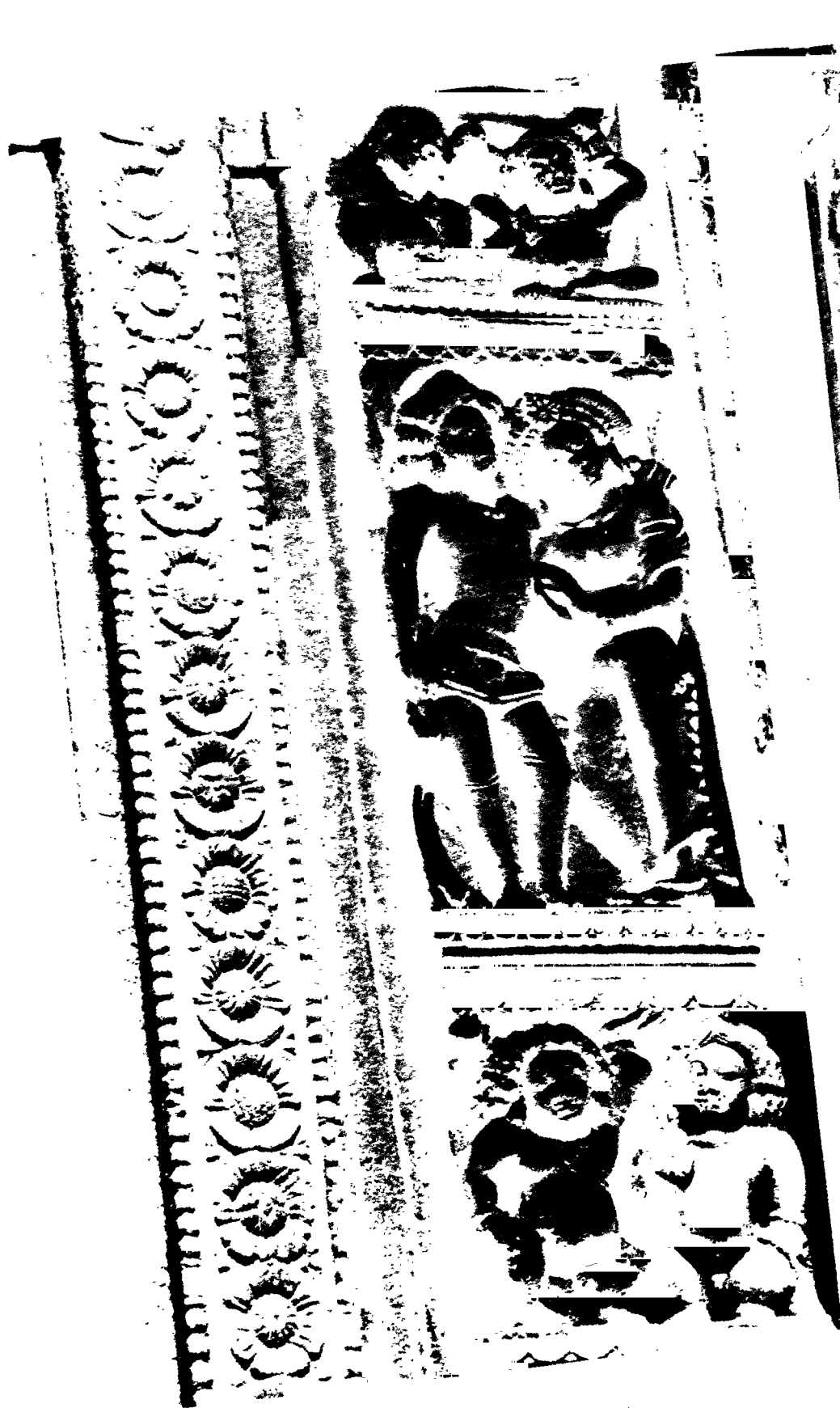


111



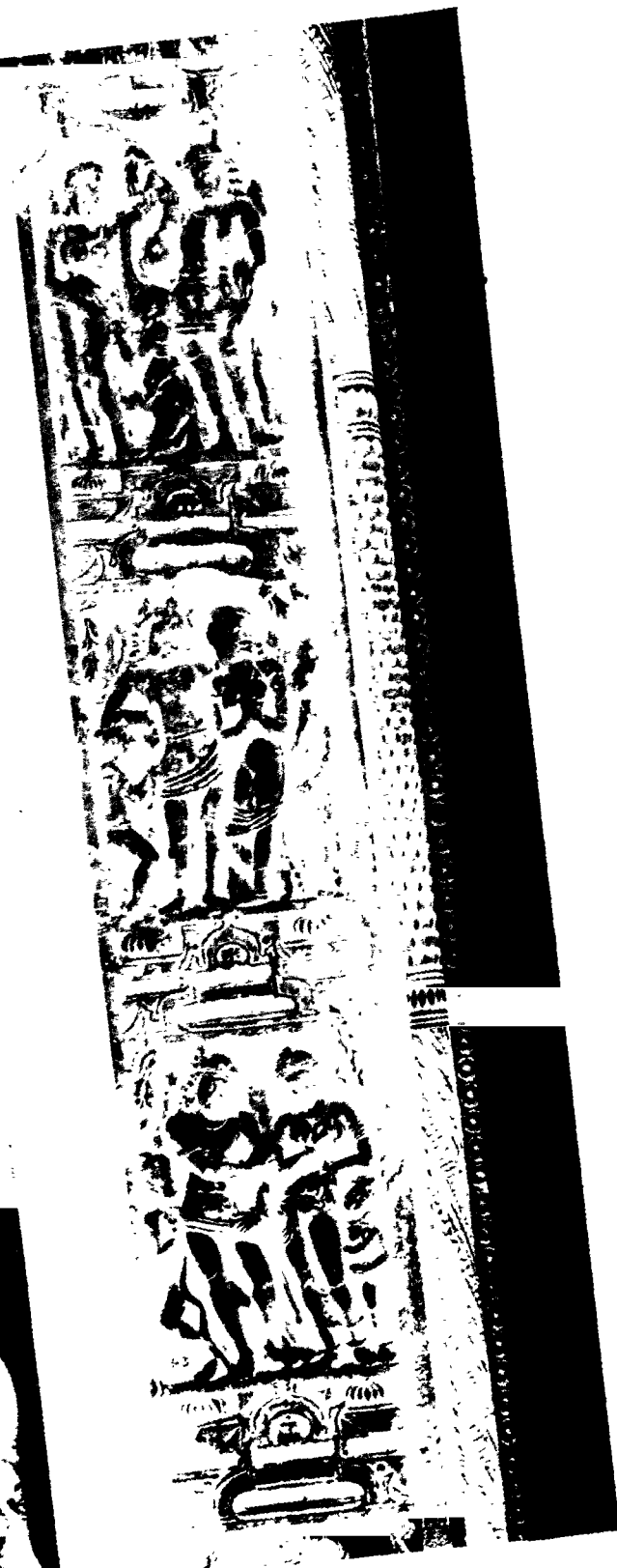
112

- 110. *Mithuna figures in superimposed panels on doorjambs.*
- 111. *Temple doorframe showing bands of superimposed panels with Mithuna figures.*
- 112. *Mithuna figures.*



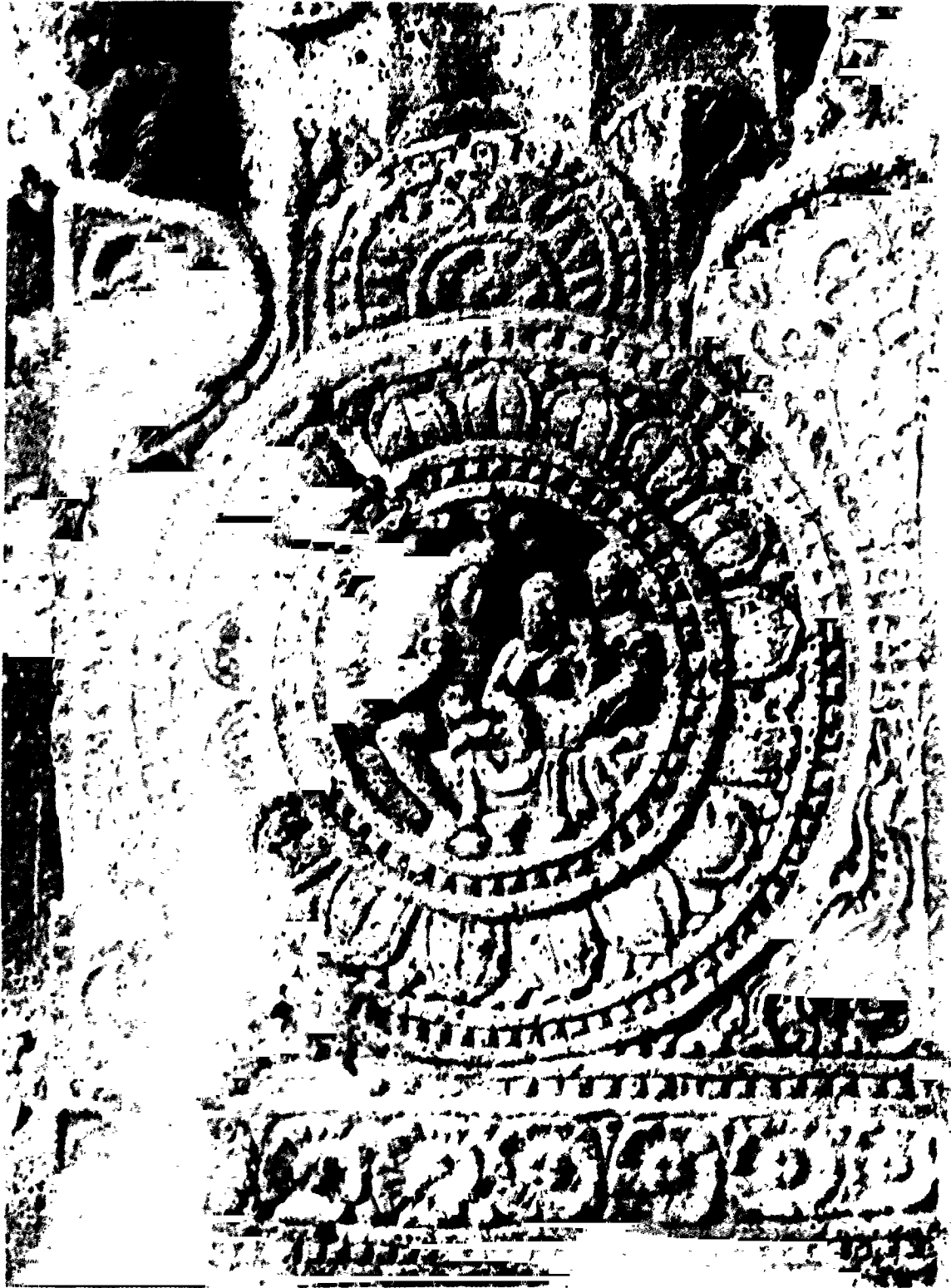
113

113. A Mithuna group.



114

114. Amorous Mithunas.  
115. See colour plates.





117

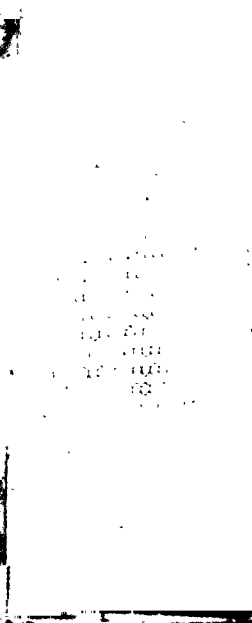
117. *A flying couple.*

118. *Amorous couples on doorway.*

119. *Amorous couples and standing damsel with a parrot.*

120. *Amorous couples and other figures*

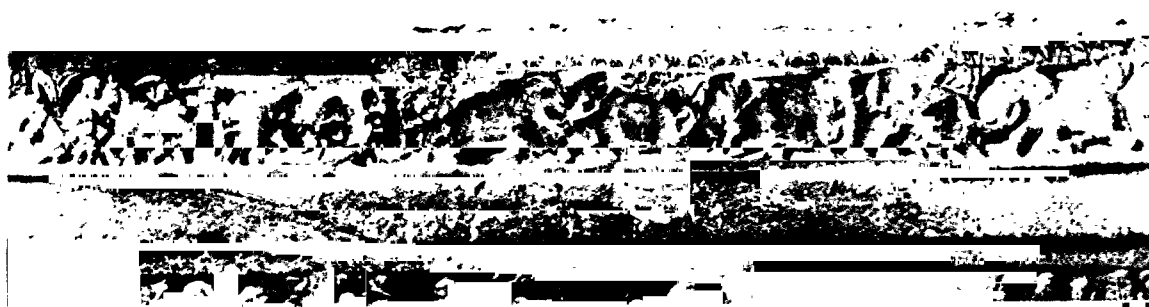
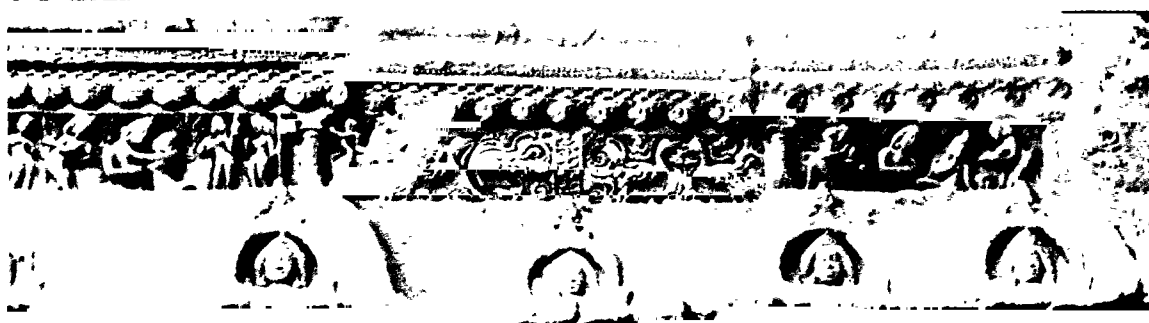
121. *Flying Gandharva Mithuna in an attitude of love.*





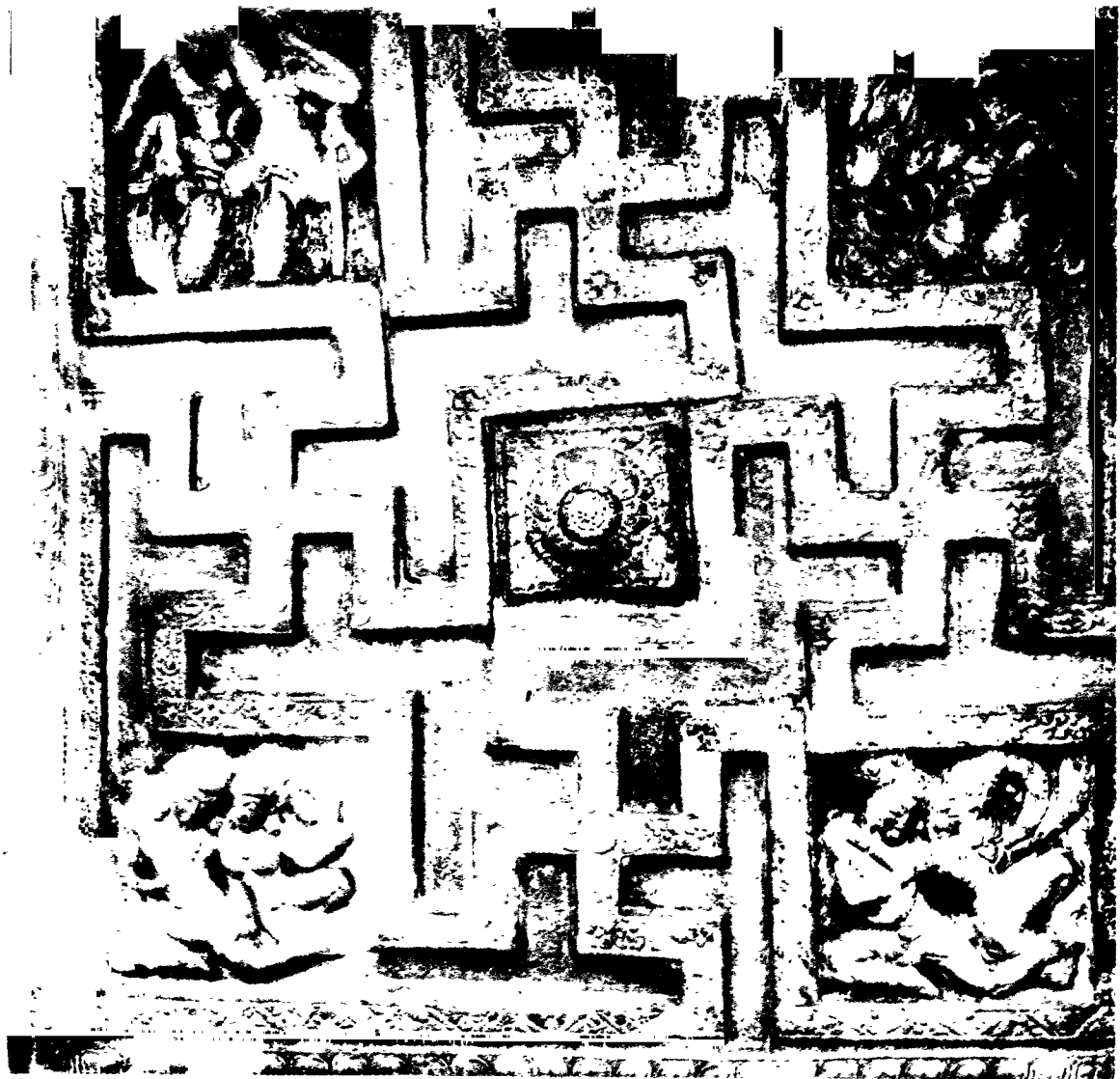
121

9



120



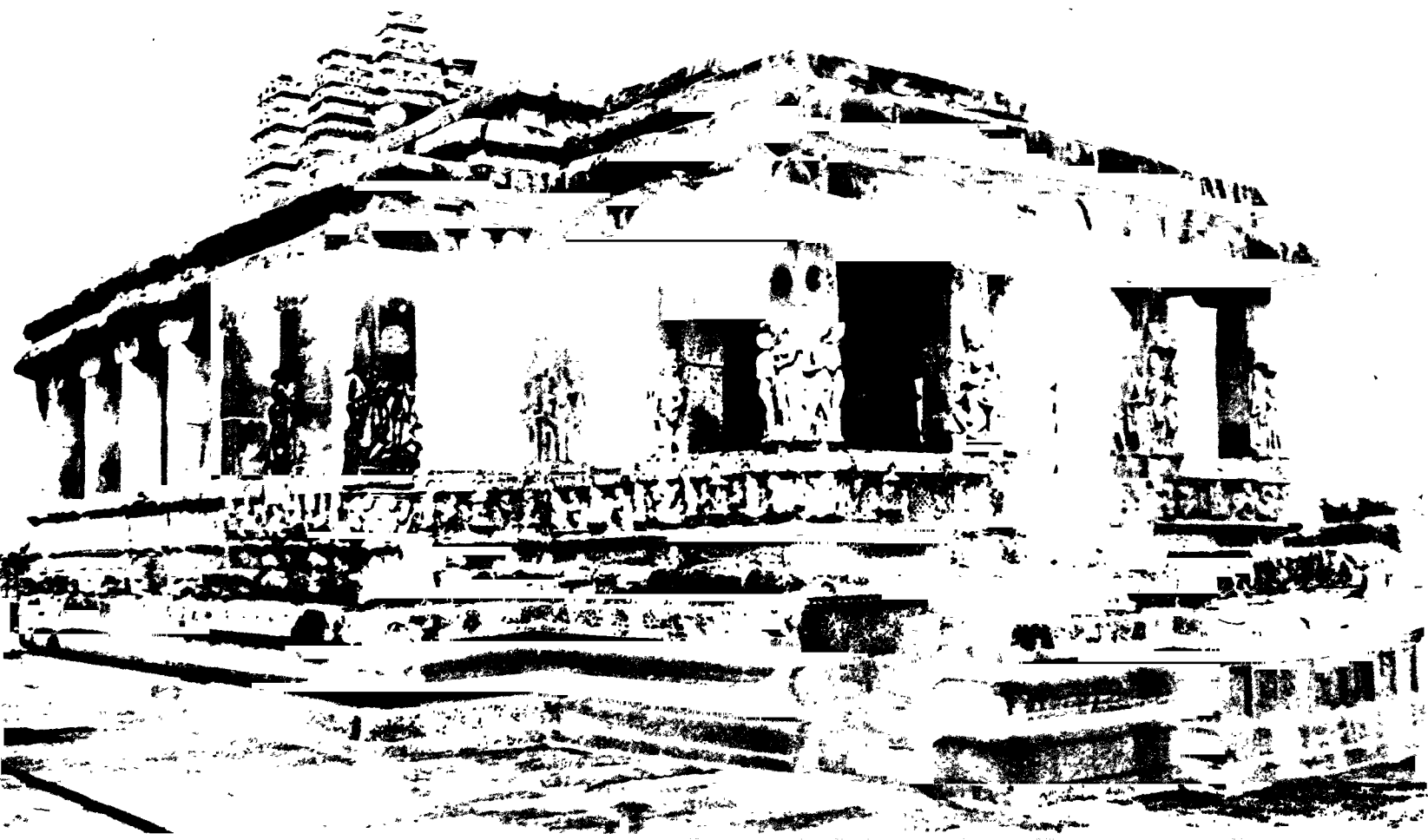


122

122. *Flying couples.*

123. *Amorous couples on pillars of the cloister.*

123





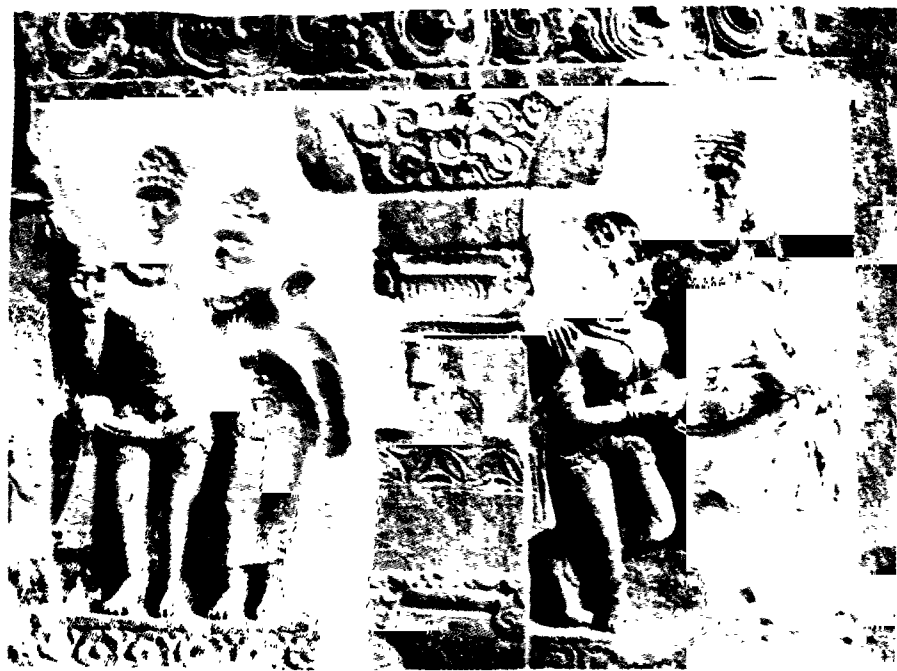
124. *A flying Mithuna, interpreted by O.C. Gangoly as representing the third sign of the zodiac.*

125. *Man-and-Woman as Mithuna Rāśi, the third sign of the zodiac, with the Sun.*

124

125





127

126. *Amorous Mithuna.*

127. *Two Mithuna groups.*

128. *Mithuna scenes on temple superstructure.*

129-132. *Four Mithuna groups from temple superstructure.*

133. *Amorous Mithunas and other figures.*

134. *Amorous couple.*

135. *Amorous couples, maidens and ithyphallic dwarfs.*

136. *A flying Gandharva couple and a standing Mithuna.*



126



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129

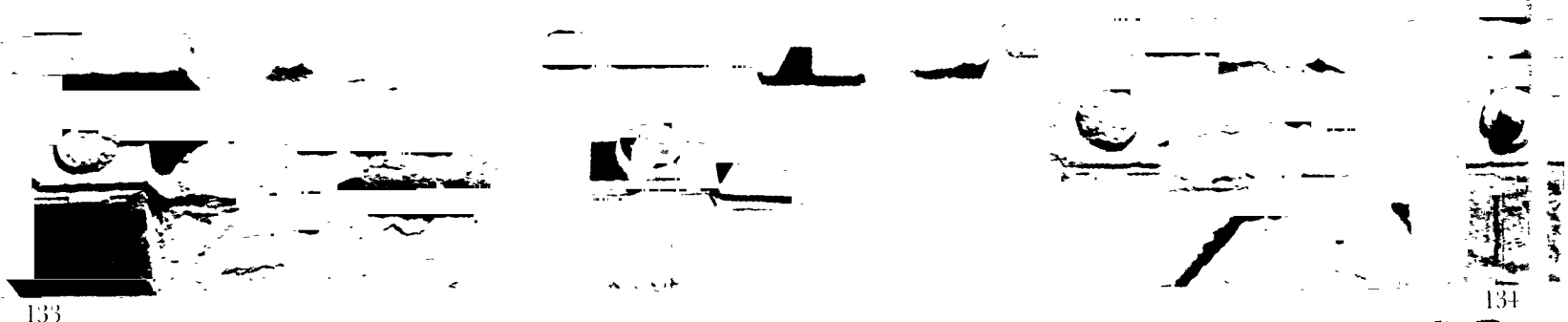
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131

132

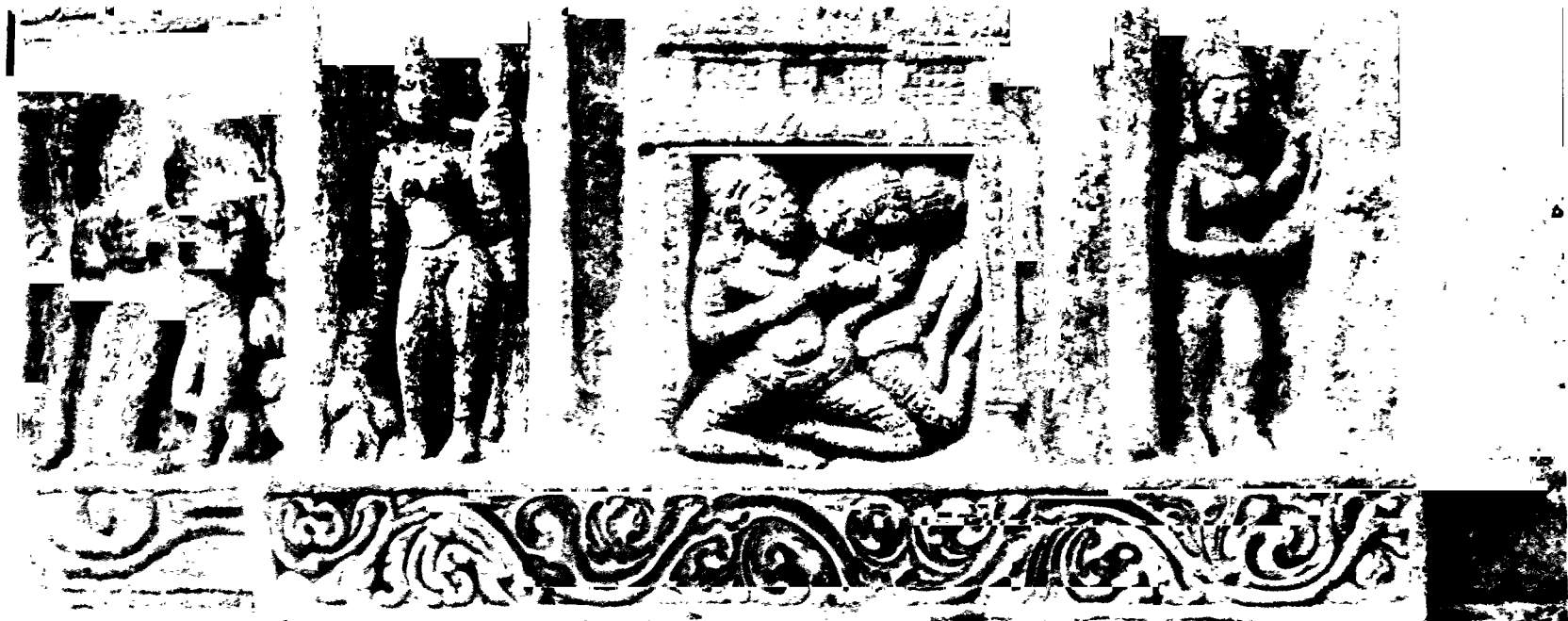




133

134





135

136







137 *Kinnara or centaur Mithuna. Human male is riding the horse-bodied centauress.*

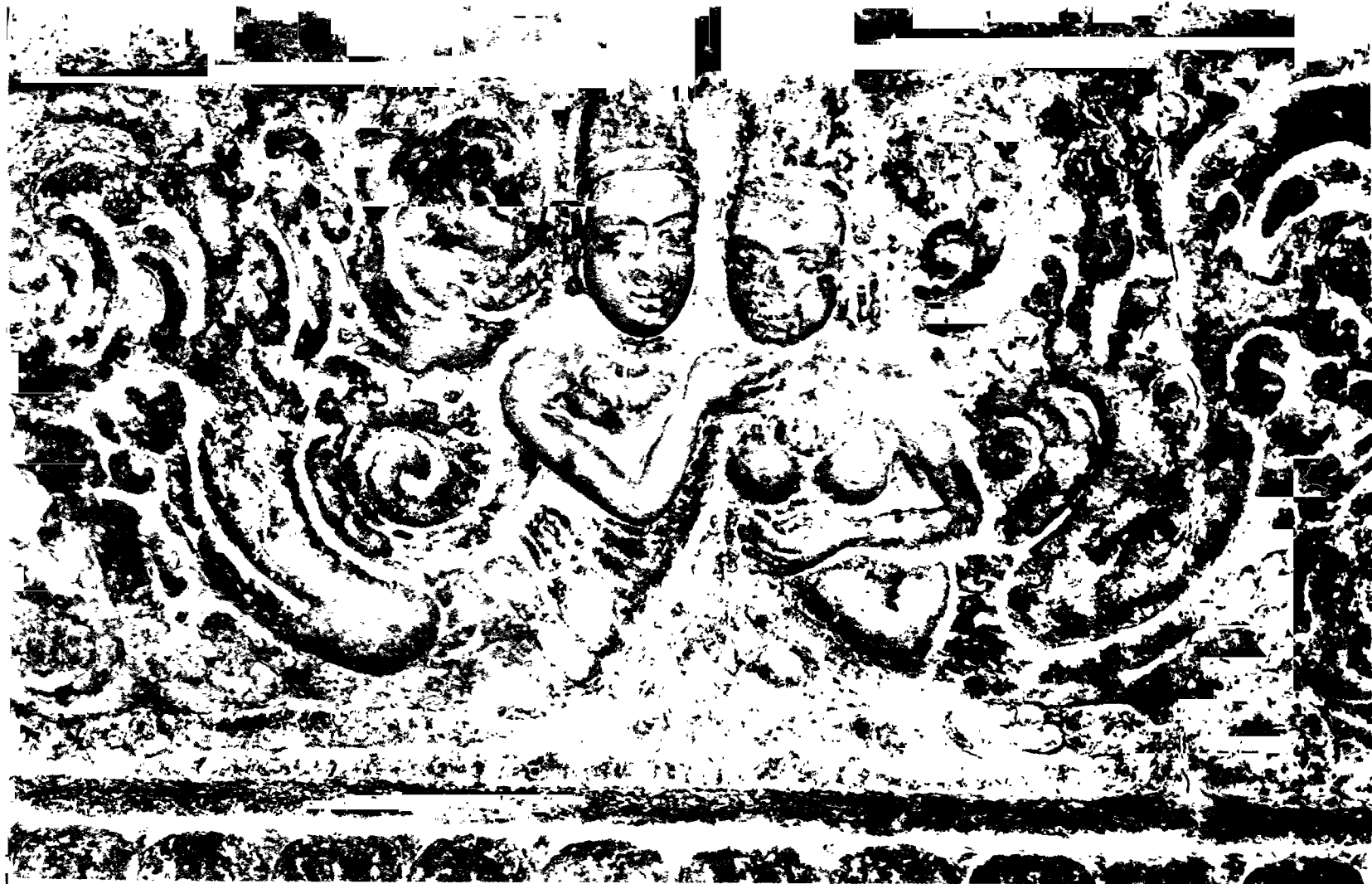


138

138. *A human lover with a horse-faced centauress.*

139. *A Mithuna of semi-human beings.*





140

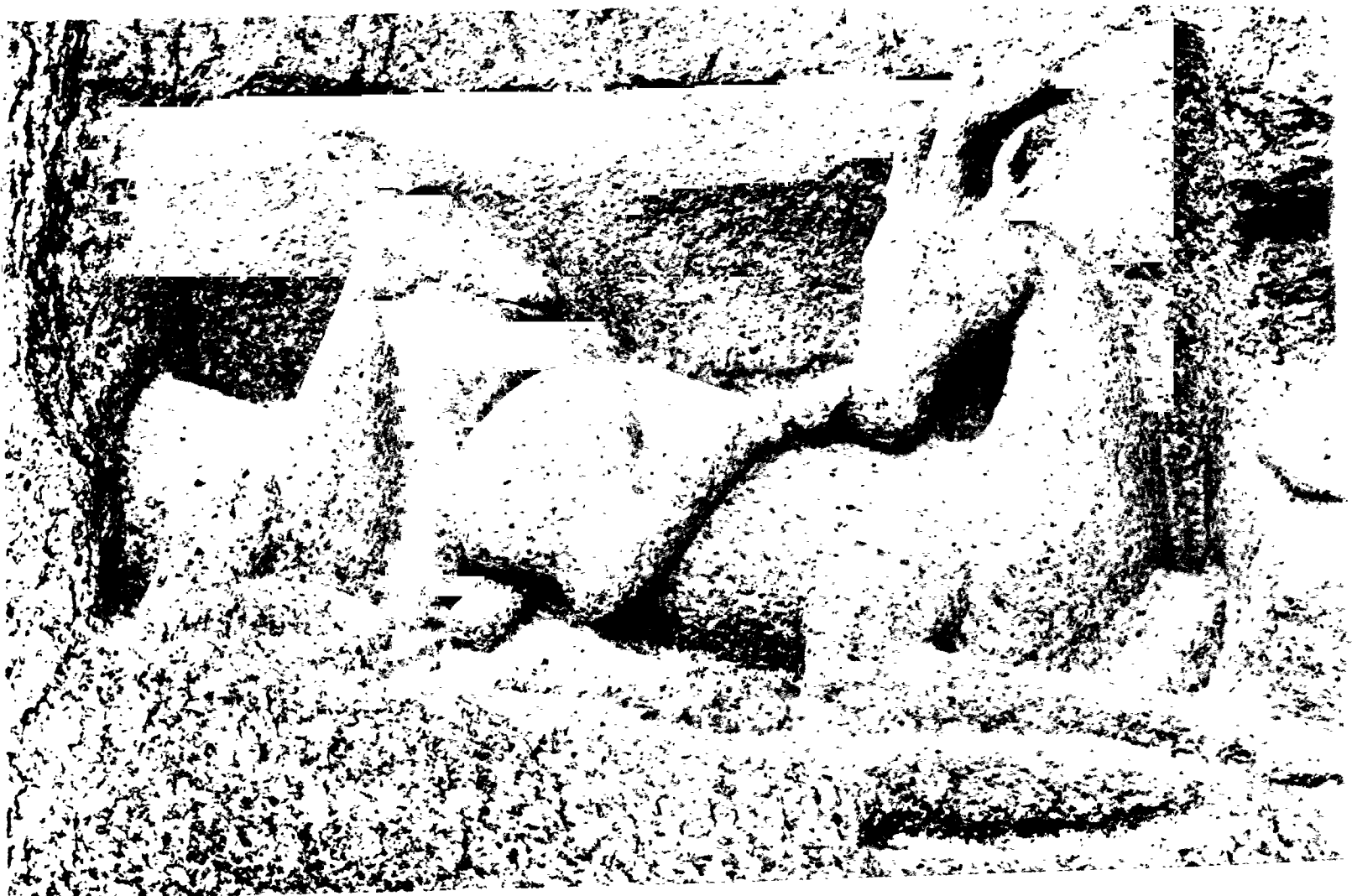
140. *Jala-mānuṣa Mithuna in an amorous attitude.*

141. *Jala-mānuṣa Mithuna in an amorous attitude.*



141





142

142. *Antelope pair.*

143. *Monkey family. The male takes out lice from the female's head who suckles the young one.*



143



144



146



145

144. *Seated Nāga couple.*

145. *Mīna-mithuna or Pair of Fishes.*

146. *Sālabhaṅṇikā. A Yakṣī or dryad standing on a makara or sea-monster.*



147



148

147. *Sālabhaṅṅkā. A Yakṣi or dryad in embrace of a tree stands over an elephant.*

148. *Sālabhaṅṅkā. Woman standing on lotus in part embrace of a tree.*



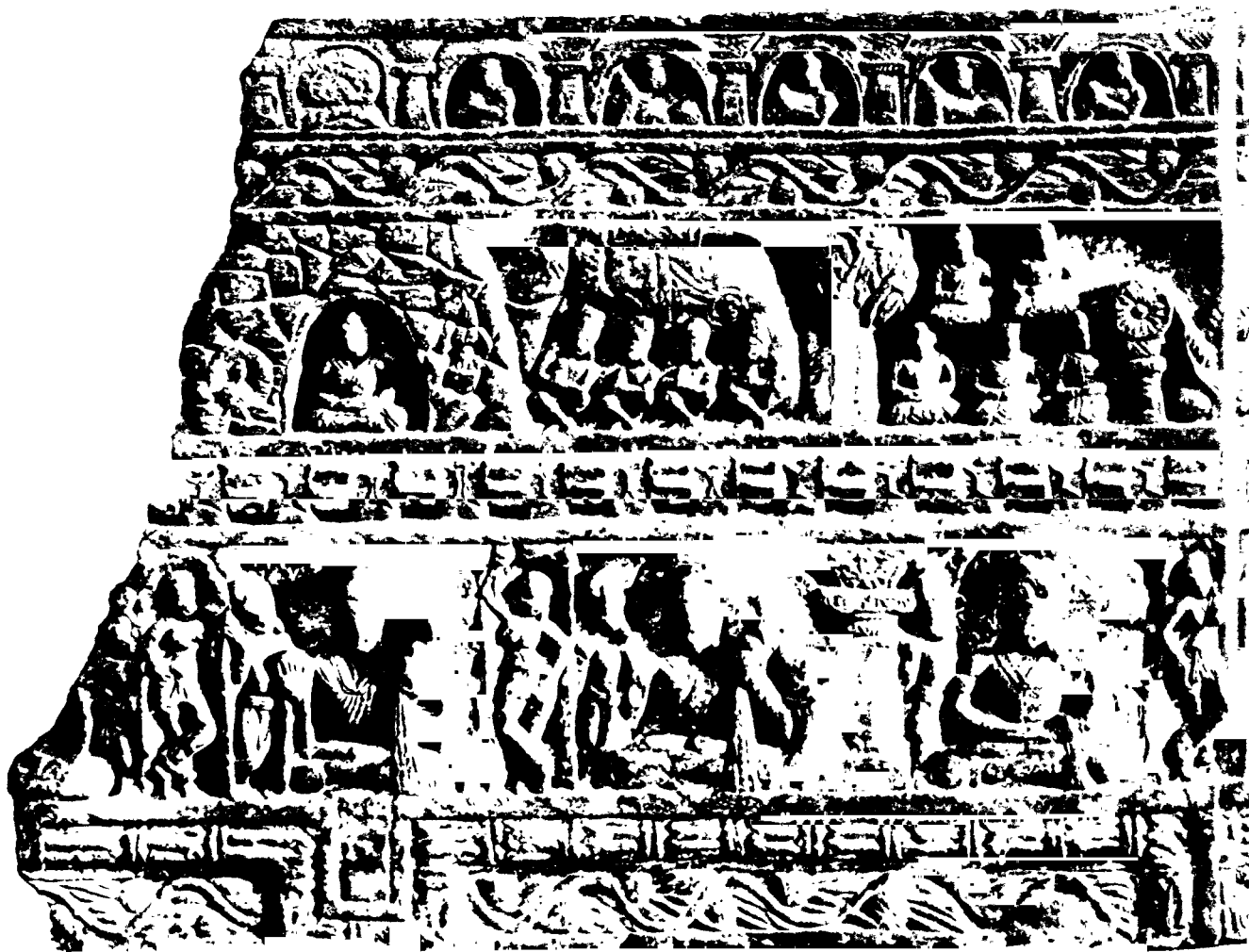


150

150. *Sālabhañjikā. A Yakṣī or dryad.*

151. *See colour plates.*

152. *Sālabhañjikā damsels on railing  
uprights flanking seated Buddha  
figures.*



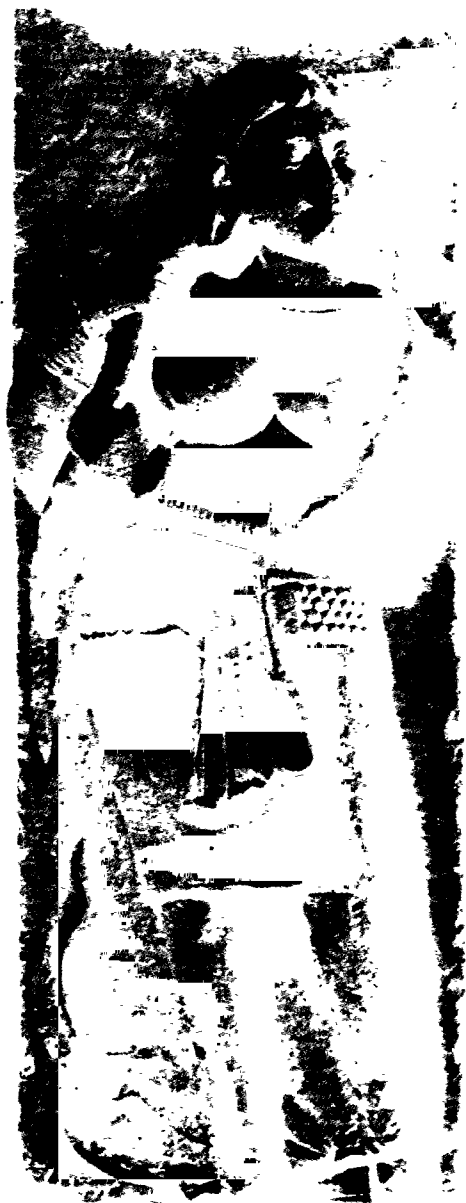
152



153

153. *Stūpa with Nāga-slab attended by maidens.*

154. *Maiden wringing her hair after bath, the falling water-drops being swallowed up by a swan. Above: a couple in balcony.*



154



155



156

155. *Indolent maiden in dance ecstasy.  
A parrot perched on her thigh nibbles  
at the girdle. A nude couchant dwarf  
under her feet.*

156. *Maiden with a wine cup standing  
under an Aśoka tree.*

157. *Maiden carrying a wine vessel.*

158. *See colour plates.*



157





159



160



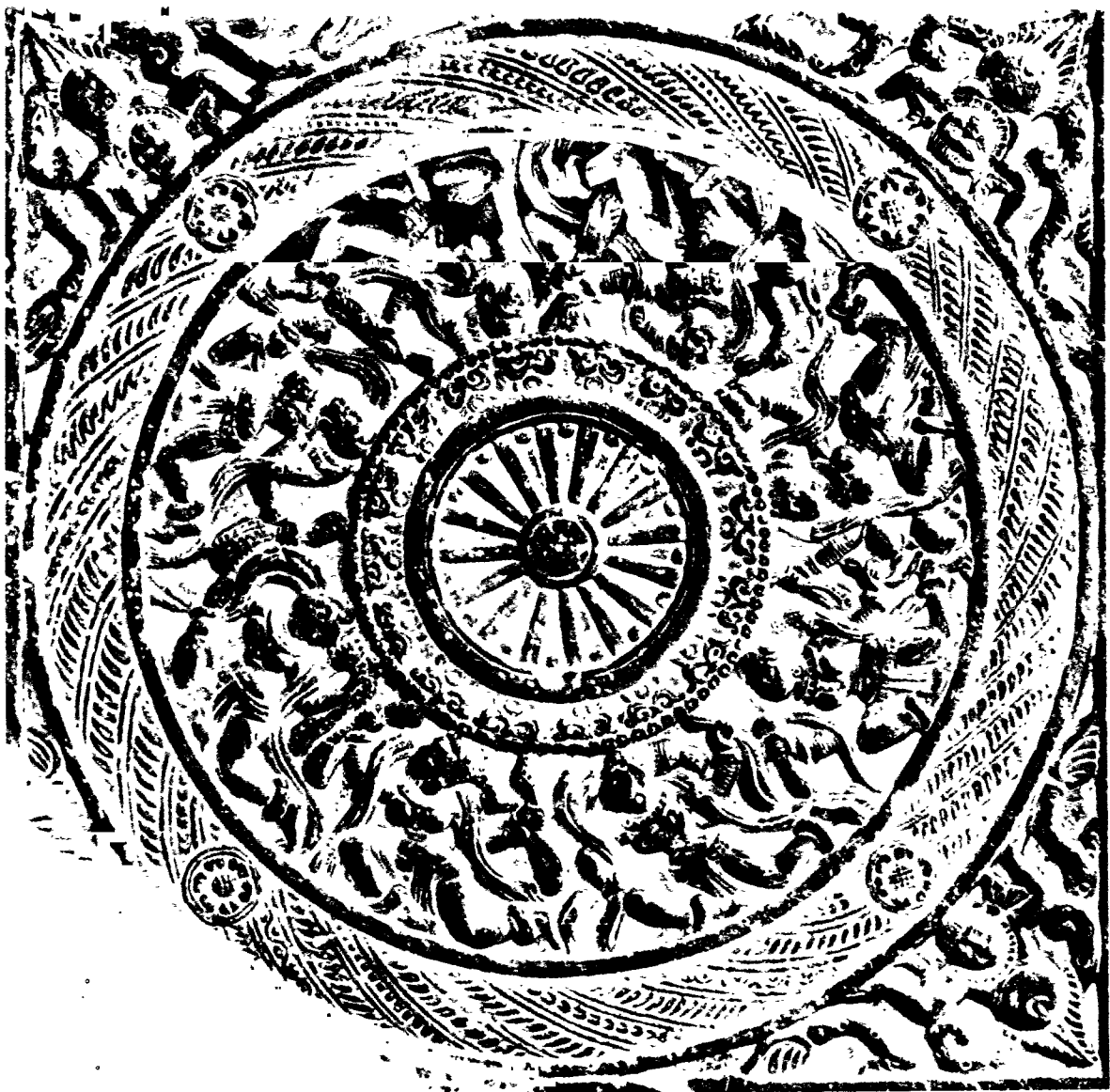
161

159. *Idle maiden standing to right with folded hands.*

160. *Sālabhañjikā sport. Maiden engaged in the pastime of culling flowers.*

161. *A sword-dancer. On lintels of the arched gateway are carved various motifs including amorous couples.*





162

163





166



162. *Eight Maidens of Space in an endless whirling motion encircle the Wheel-of-Law.*

163. *Women displaying various bewitching gestures. Scenes of palace balconies of demon-king Bali.*

164. *Female bust.*

165. *Celestial beauty.*

166. *Vṛkṣakā or tree-nymph.*



167

167. *Female torso.*

168. *Nude female torso.*

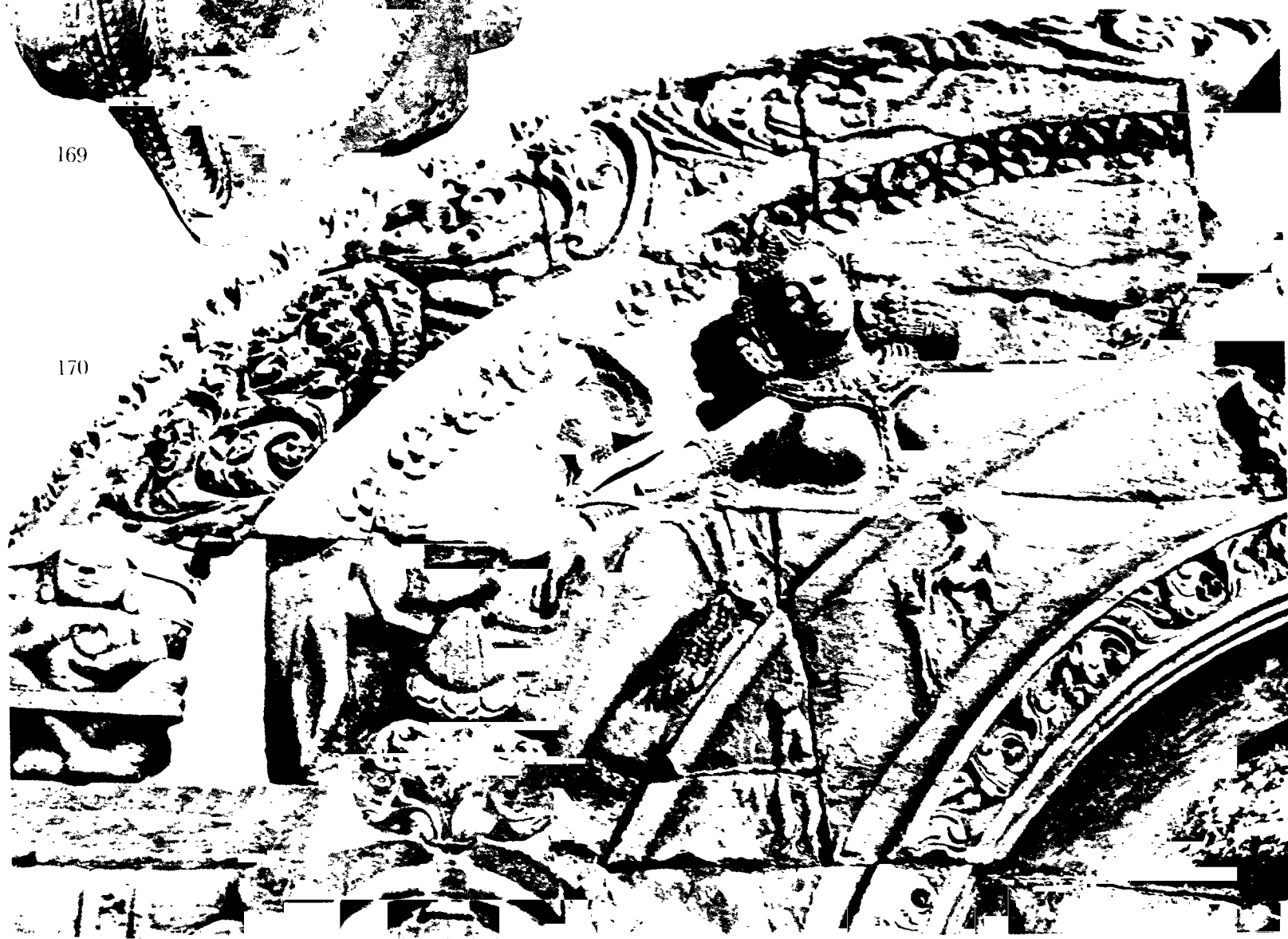


168



169

169. *Female bust.*



170

170. *Voluptuous damsel and a teasing monkey.*



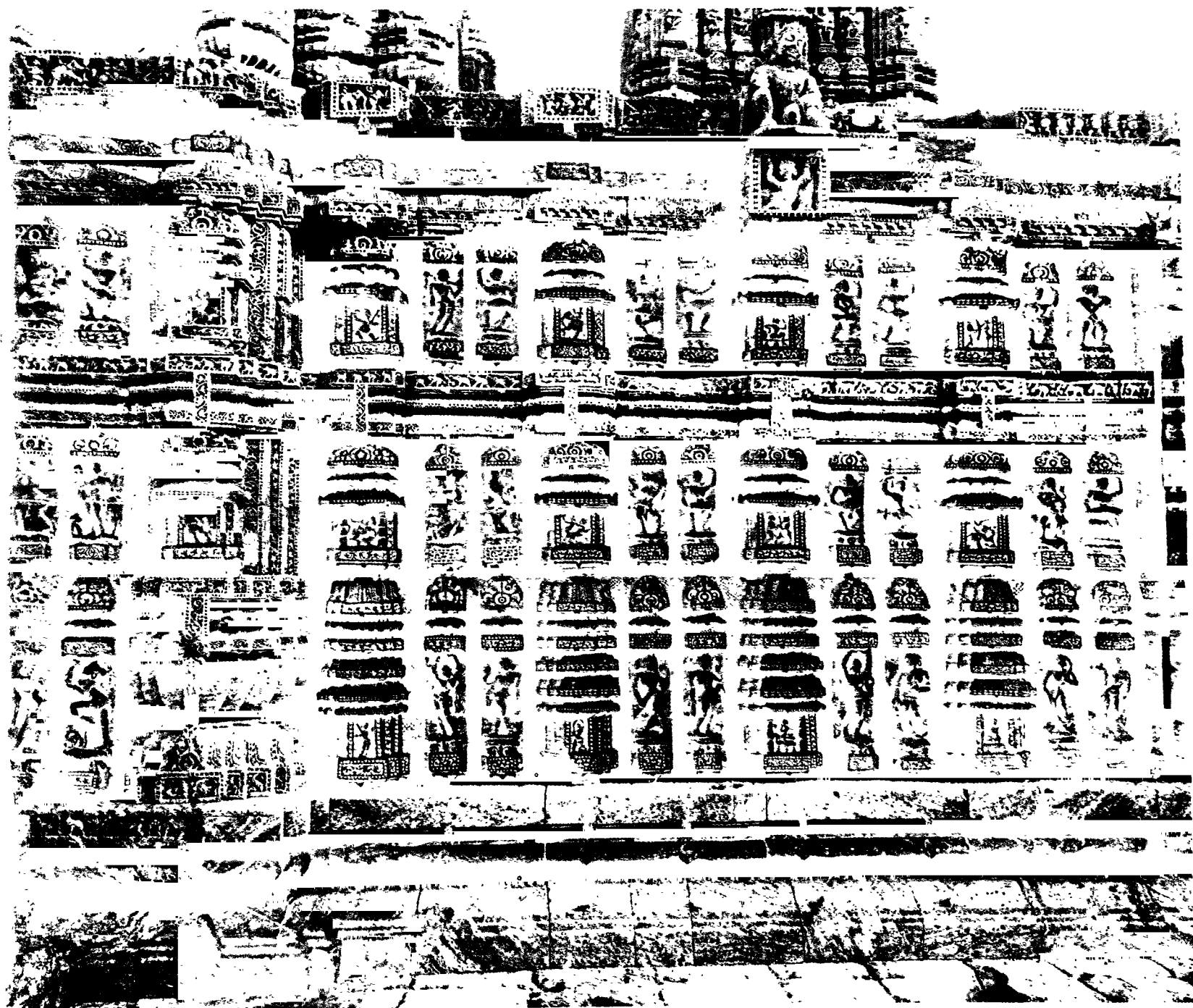
171

171. *Sālabhāṅgikā* maiden.

172. *Maiden painting her foot.*  
*Amorous couples and other figures*  
*stationed on the temple wall.*



172







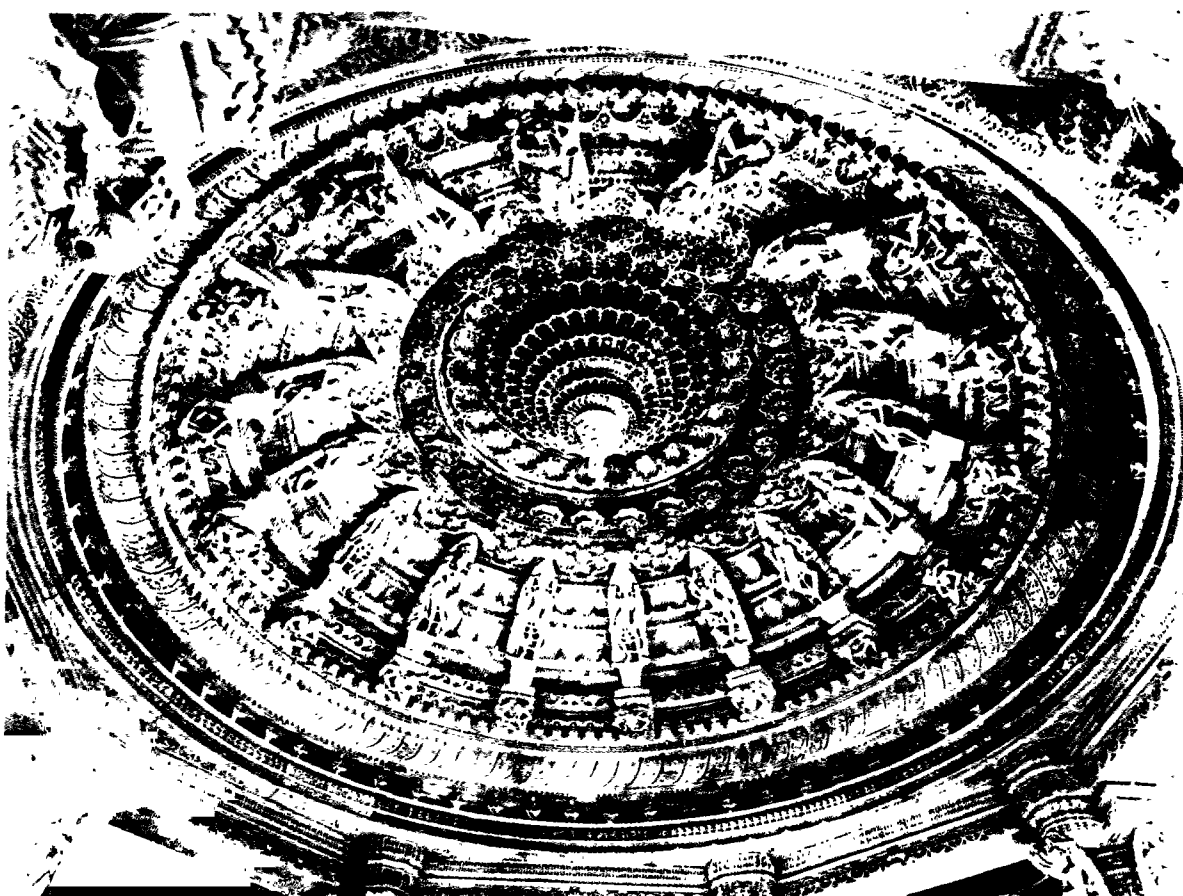
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176

175. *Sālabhaṅjikā* woman with a parrot standing under a tree grasping its foliage. A dwarf under her feet.
176. *Sālabhaṅjikā* woman stands trampling over a loving *Mithuna*.





177

177. *Sixteen Maidens of Space* occupying brackets of cupola. They may also be counted as Thirty-two by adding sixteen dancing females appearing below major figures.

178. *Seated heroine with a mirror.*

179-181. *See colour plates.*

182. *Utkā Nāyikā. Heroine awaiting the lover who approaches.*

183. *Rāginī Toḍī, represented by a maiden playing an Vīṇā in the forest with deer.*

184. *Rāginī Āsārarū, represented by a Śabara maiden charming serpents in the forest.*

185. *Rāginī Bhairavī, represented by a woman worshipping Śiva Liṅga.*



178



182



184

185



186



188



189



187

[illegible]

193



श्रीरागपुरुषः॥विचित्रमिद्यासनमध्यवर्तीविकारचिह्नंरुचिरंरंक्षानः॥  
कुर्वन्कथानारदबुबरायोश्रीरागराजःकथितोमुनीदैः॥३१॥



194

195

नकौत्तिकरागः॥नितेबिनीचामरचालनेनयुक्तेनचालनेनहेमपीठः॥  
वराहकचनकाचिरादाश्रीमालवामालवयंचमाख्यः॥३२॥



क्रिदारोरागनी॥विद्याविरहसंतापकृषितोभूसरीसतिः॥३३॥  
रागःज्यामोययुवासवीगसुंदरः॥३४॥



196

186. Rāginī Sāraṅga, represented by a maiden with deer in the garden.
187. Rāginī Kāmoda, represented by a lonely maiden in the forest.
188. Rāginī Rāmakaḷī, represented by a woman seated in the chamber.
189. Rāginī Tailaṅgī, represented by a maiden with a torch on the bank of a rivulet.
190. Rāginī Baṅgāla, represented by a maiden as an ascetic.
191. Rāginī Gauṛī or Gauṛ-Malhār, represented by a maiden seated as an ascetic in a pavilion on an island in the stormy night. The first element Gauṛ in the name signifies Bengal; Malhār is the melody of rainy season.
192. Rāga Hṛṇḍola, represented by a couple on a swing.
193. Rāga Dīpaka, represented by a prince on elephant moving in a procession of the Lamp-festival with female musicians and maids.
194. Rāga Śrī, represented by a couple listening to a concert.
195. Rāga Mālavakauśika, represented by a lord attended by a maid and enjoying music.
196. Rāginī Kedāra, represented by an ascetic with a disciple.



197. *A Son of Rāga Pañcama, represented by a youth with black bucks.*

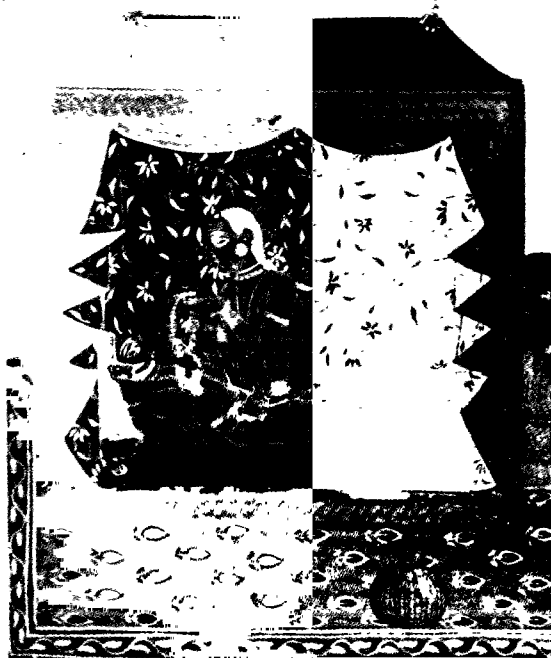
198-200. *See colour plates.*

201. *Kāmadeva, the World-conquering Hero carrying his sugarcane bow and flower-arrows, and consort Rati with a parrot.*



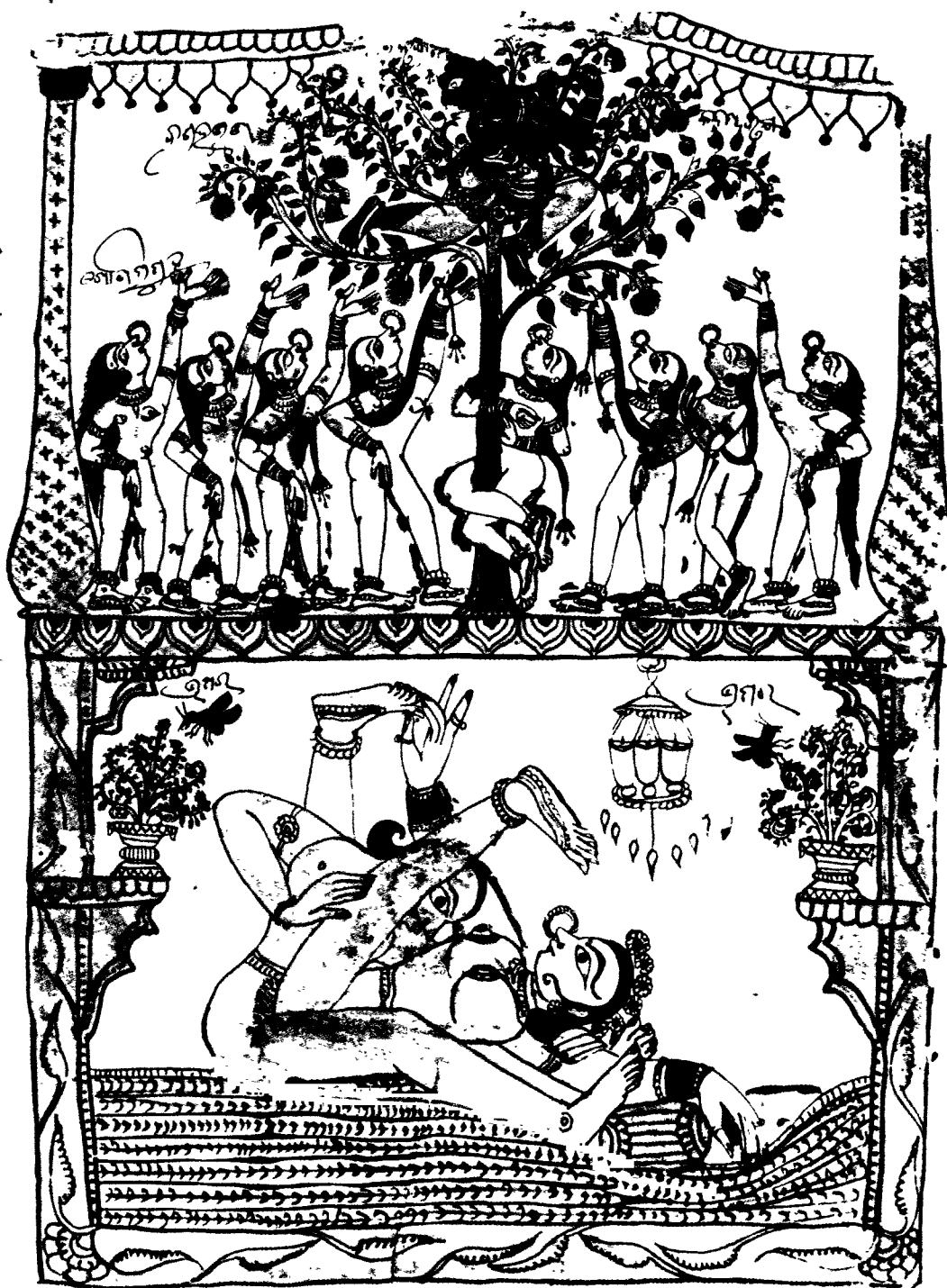














206



207

206. *Amorous couples.*

207. *Uniting couples.*



208

208. *Uniting Mithuna.*



209

209. *Emaciated ithyphallic ascetic in dance ecstasy with a drinking cup.*



210. *Naked woman standing over Linga, representing the act of initiation into Tantric inner circle.*

211. *Convention. The Great Guru presides over an assembly of Tantric conventuals.*





212

212. *Detail of Ill. 211.*

213. *Yogī with Yoginī. Note the līṅga-symbol set in the circular ear-plaque of the male figure who probably wears a mask.*



213



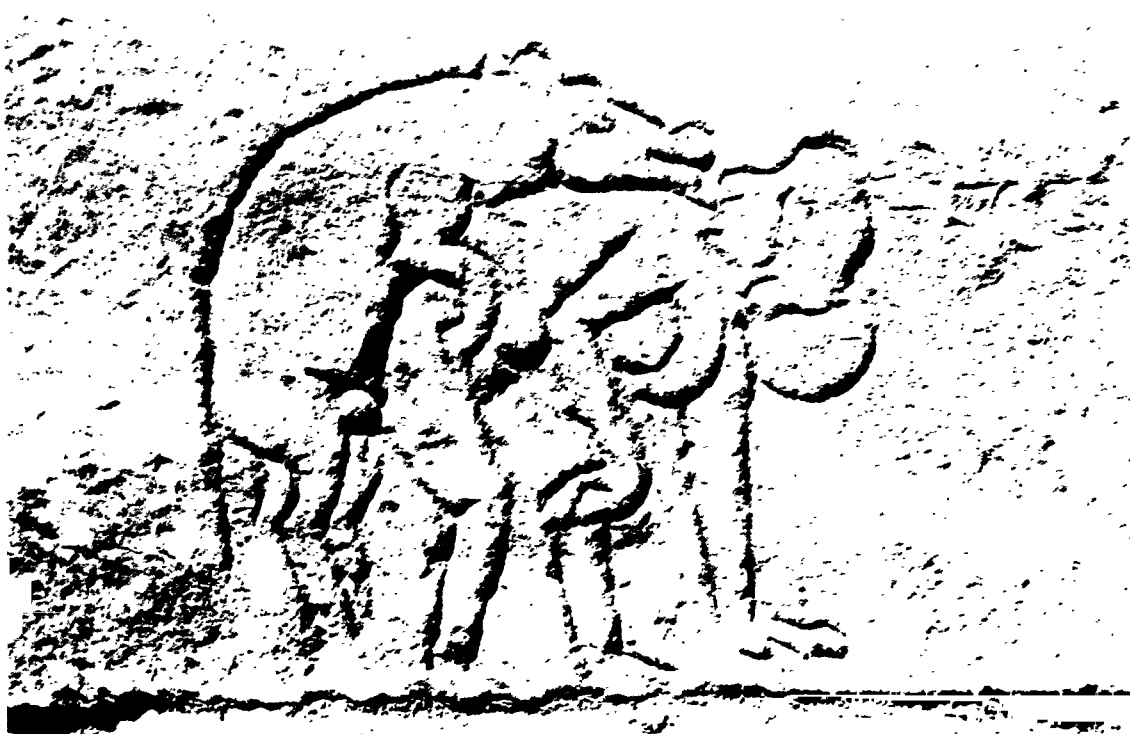
214

215





216



217

- 214. *Ritual intercourse supervised by the Guru who bestows 'ambrosial drink' on the disciple.*
- 215. *Maithuna orgies and the preparation of virility-increasing nutriment.*
- 216. *Scenes of Maithuna rite. Left: A female being united by a stallion.*
- 217. *A female Tantric being united by a boar.*

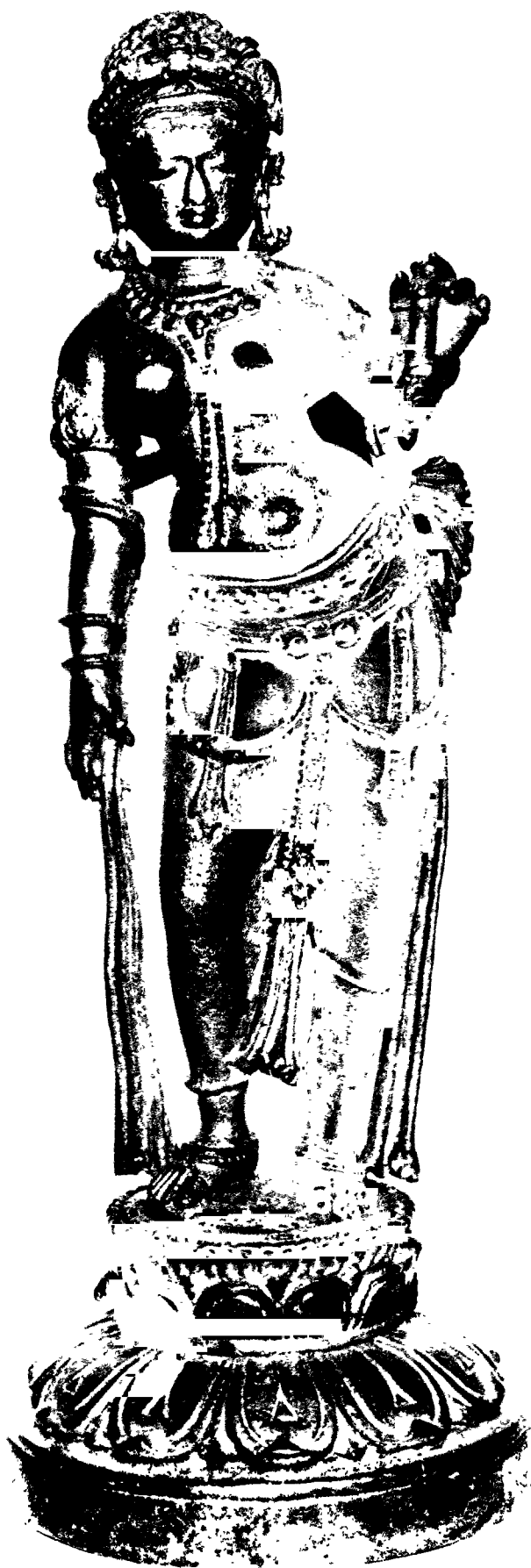




218



218. *Union with a mare.*  
219. *Ritual Maithuna.*



220

220. *Devadāsī, Harlot-of-god, carrying flychisk.*

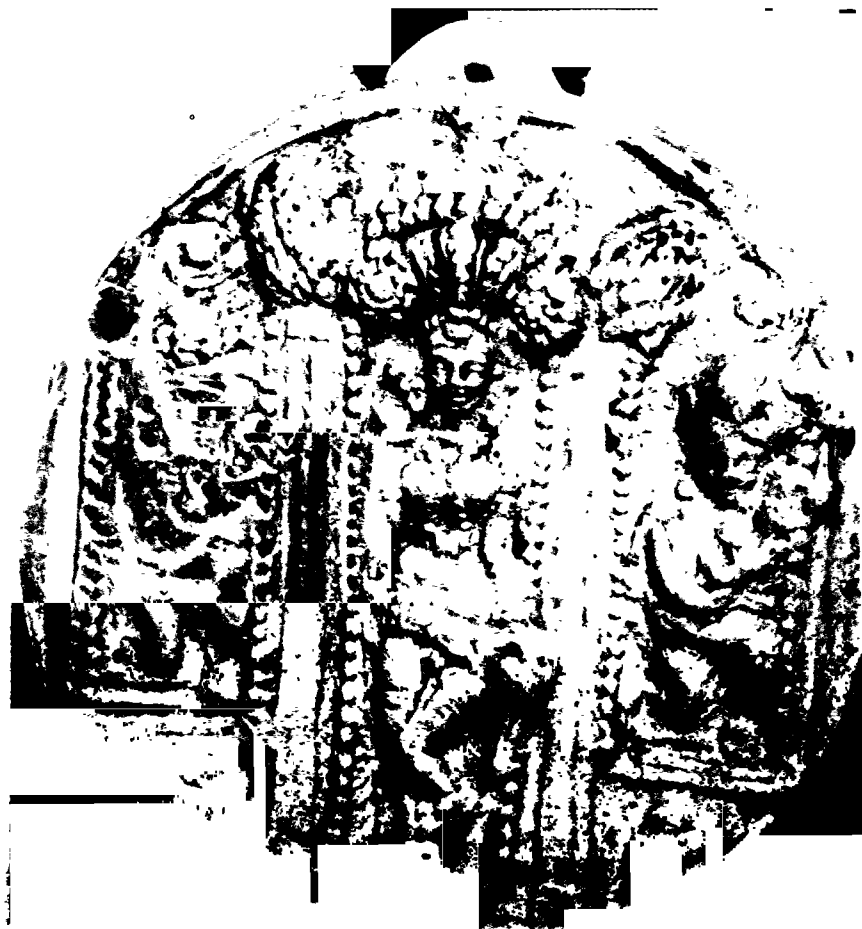


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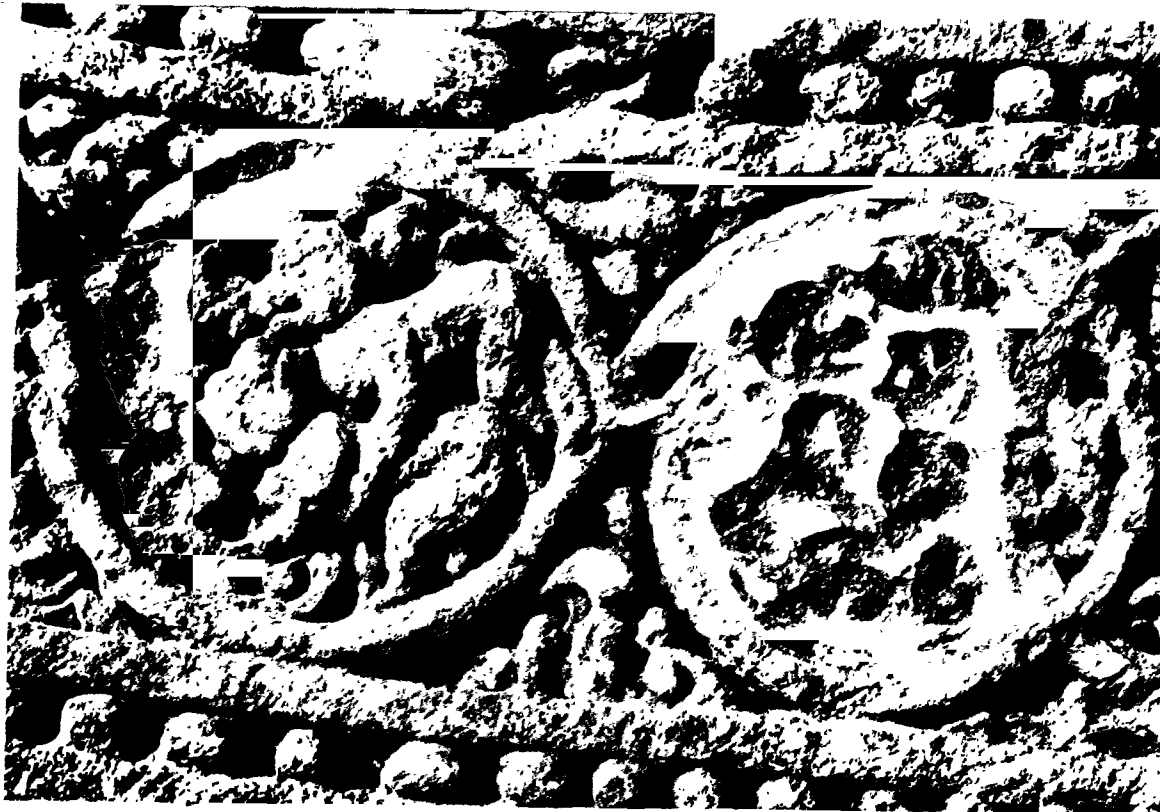
221. *Young hermit Rśyaśṛṅga. Note the stag's horn above the forehead suggesting his iconography.*

222. *See colour plates.*

223. *In the shrine of Goddess Lakṣmī. Standing Goddess in the centre and couples performing Maithuna ritual on either side.*



223



224

224. *Monkey couples.*

225-26. *See colour plates.*

227. *Rāsa-maṇḍala or Dance-circle of Cowherd-girls as multiple individual souls with Kṛṣṇa the Eternal Male.*

228. *Kṛṣṇa steals the clothes of cowherdresses bathing in the river.*

229. *Portrait of Haridāsa Śrāmī singing devotional hymns with the vision of divine Kṛṣṇa Līlā*

230. *Ardhanārī Natarāja Śrīa in his Half-man Half-woman aspect performs the cosmic dance*

231. *Goddess Kālī on Śrīa-as-corpse.*



227



228



230



229



231

232



232. Great Goddess on Sadā-Siva. The four legs of the couch are borne by the gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Iśvara and Rudra.

233. Three-faced ithyphallic God with Śakti kneeling on his right thigh. With her right hand she raises a cup to the deity.



233

234

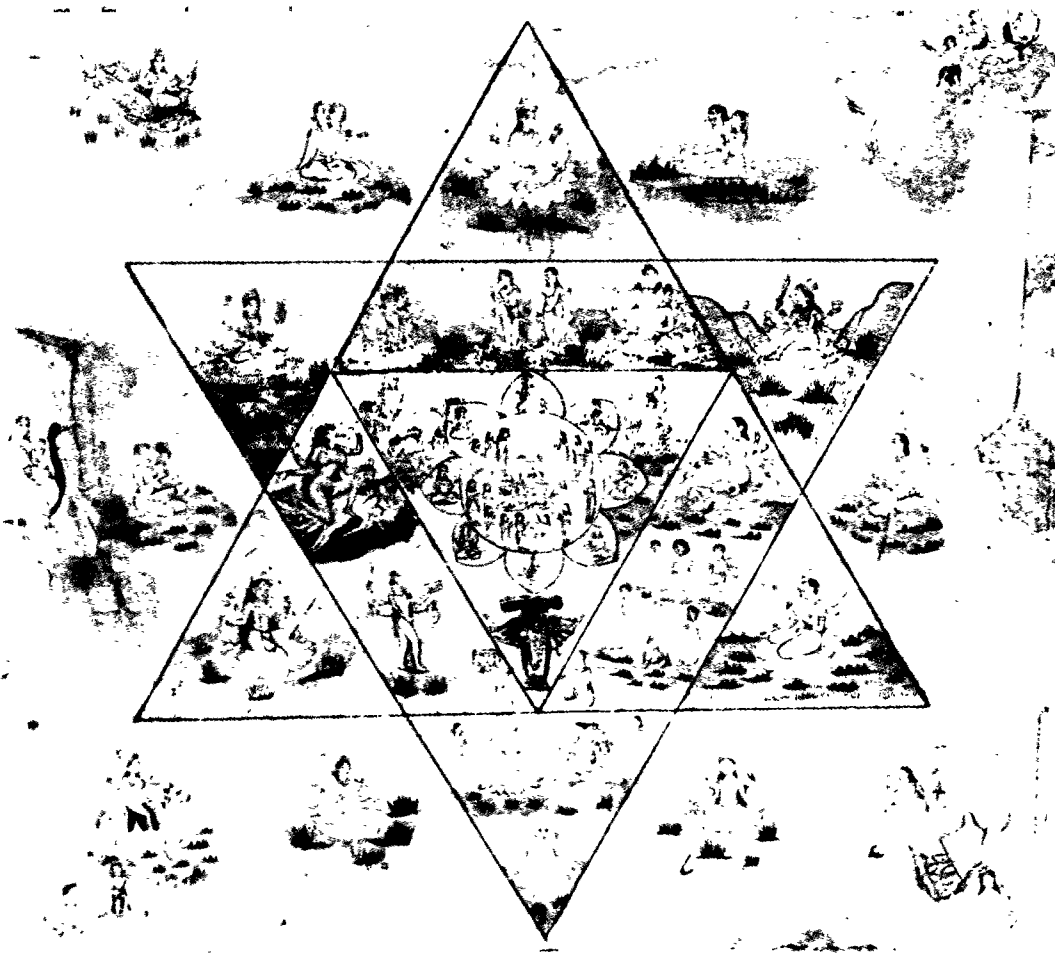


234. Yuganaddha. Heruka and Vajravārāhī united as One in Yab-yum or Father-Mother posture.

235. Citipati or Male and Female skeletons united as One dancing in the cemetery.

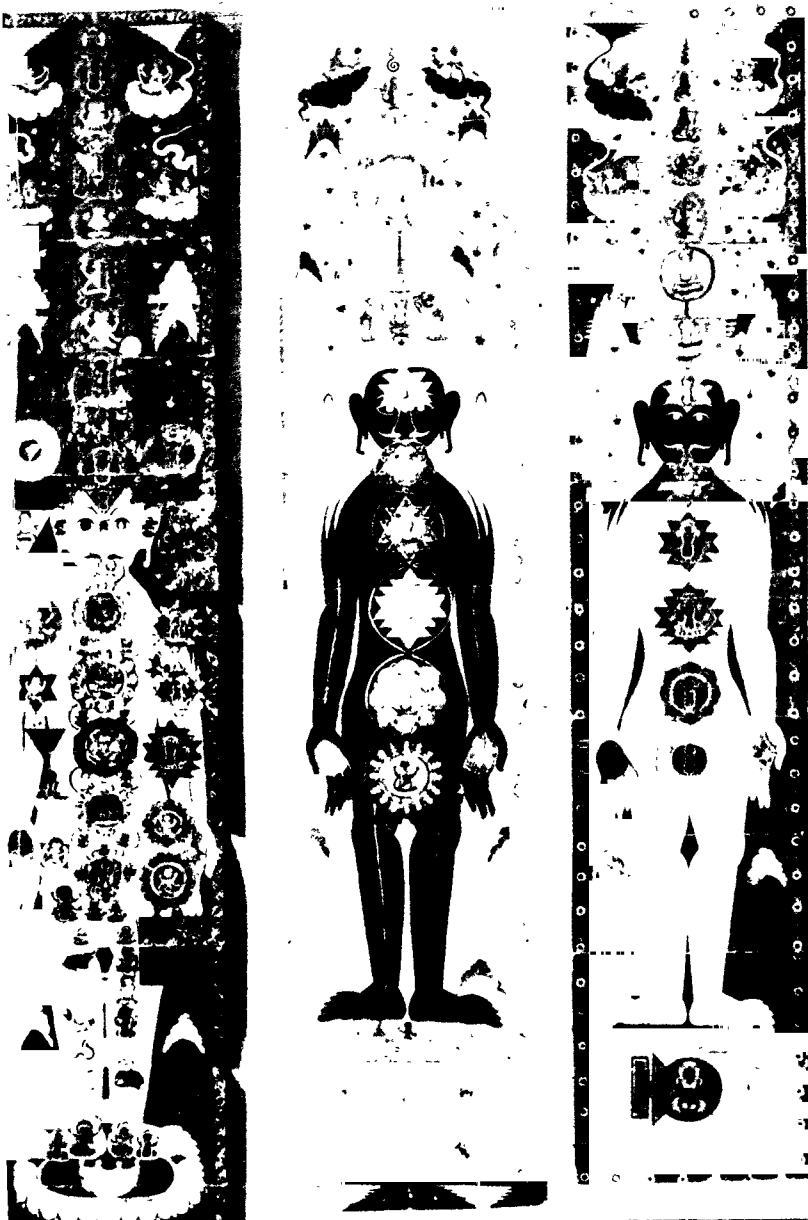


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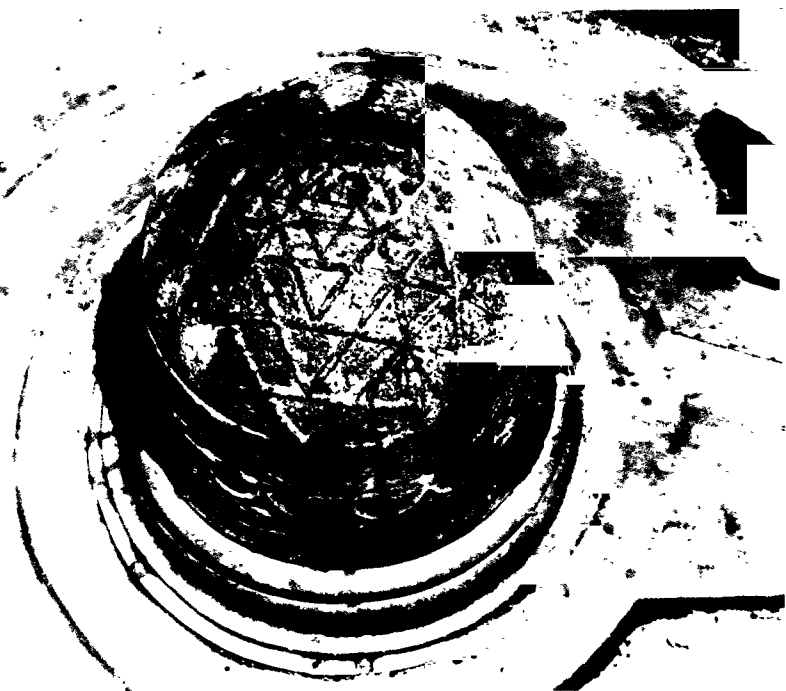


236. *Yantra of the Goddess with  
indwelling divinities.*
237. *Śrī Yantra carved in relief  
on Śiva Līṅga.*
238. *Tantric diagrams of the  
Subtle Body.*

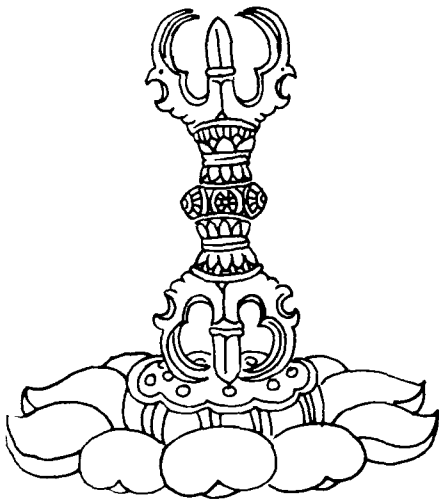
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237



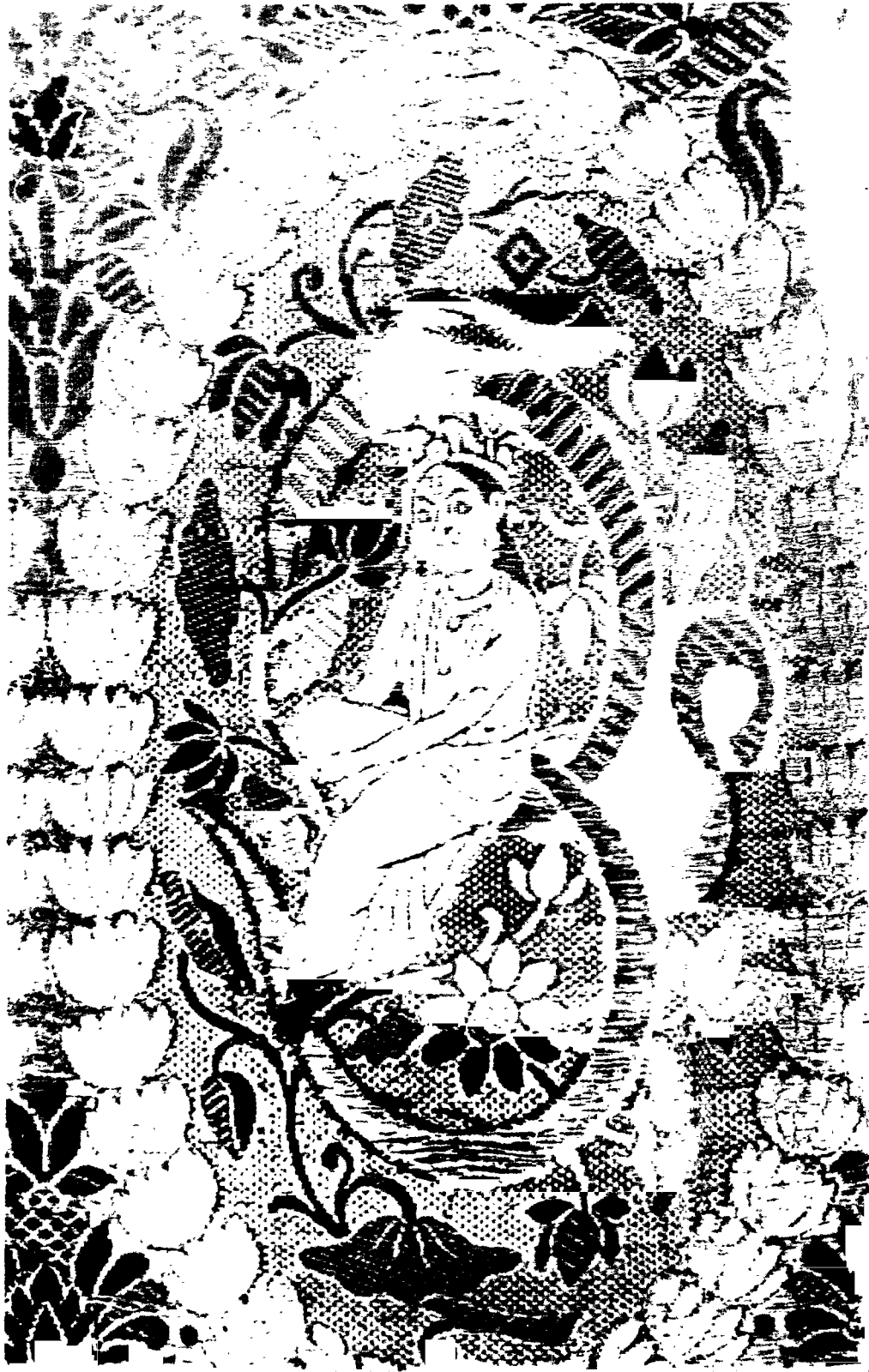
238



239

ॐ  
Om mani padme hum  
ॐ

240



239. *Vajra on the Lotus.*

240. *Om mani padme hum: Om, Jewel in the Lotus, Hum.*

241. *Mystic Syllable Om with indwelling Kṛṣṇa*





3

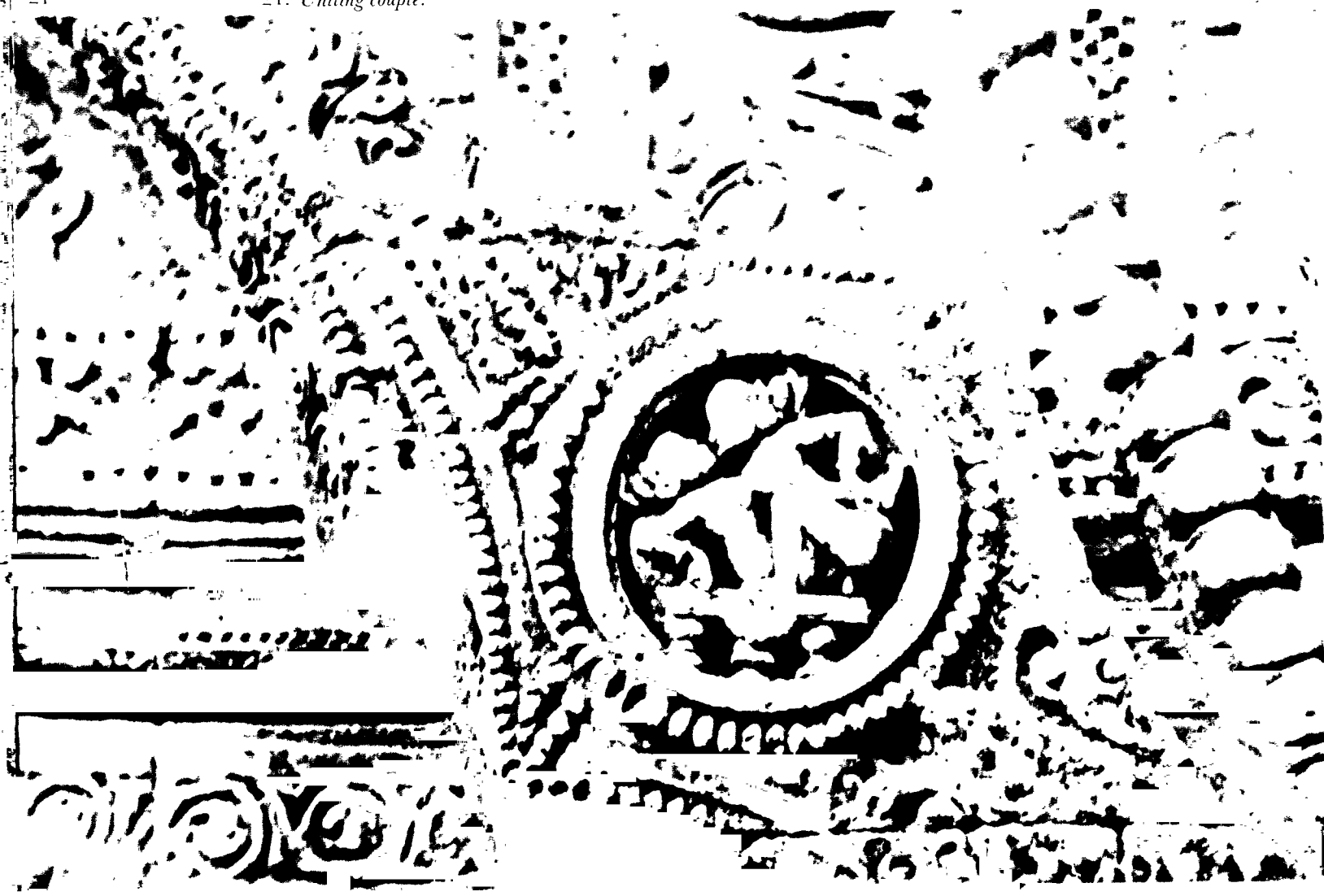
3. *Hiranya-garbha. The Golden Germ.*

4

4. *Brahmānda. The Egg of Creation, representing Self-born Creator Prajāpati or Brahmā as Ovoid Seed.*

21

21. *Uniting couple.*





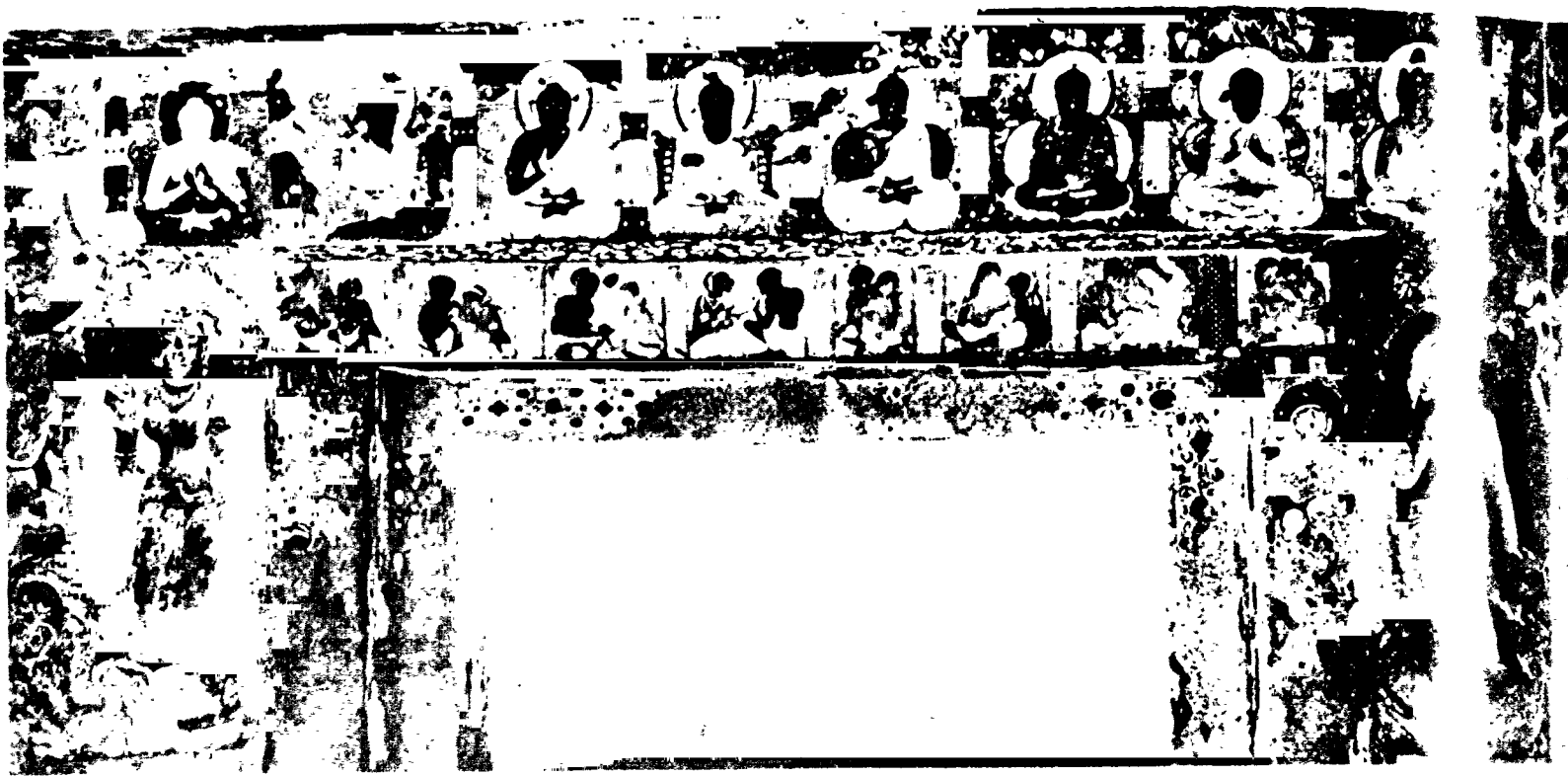




62. *Standing couple. Male plays on a lute while female is dancing.*

63. *Viṣṇu accompanied with his two consorts, Bhūdevī, Earth-goddess and Śrīdevī, Beauty-goddess.*





115



158

115. Above, Painting showing Seven  
Mortal Buddhas and Mātreyā,  
Below, Eight seated amorous  
couples

151 Sālabhāṅgā or tree-nymph

158 Spartive maidens on four uprights  
of railing



151





130 Lady with a wine cup.

131 Abhisārikā Nāyikā, Heroine on her way  
to the tryst











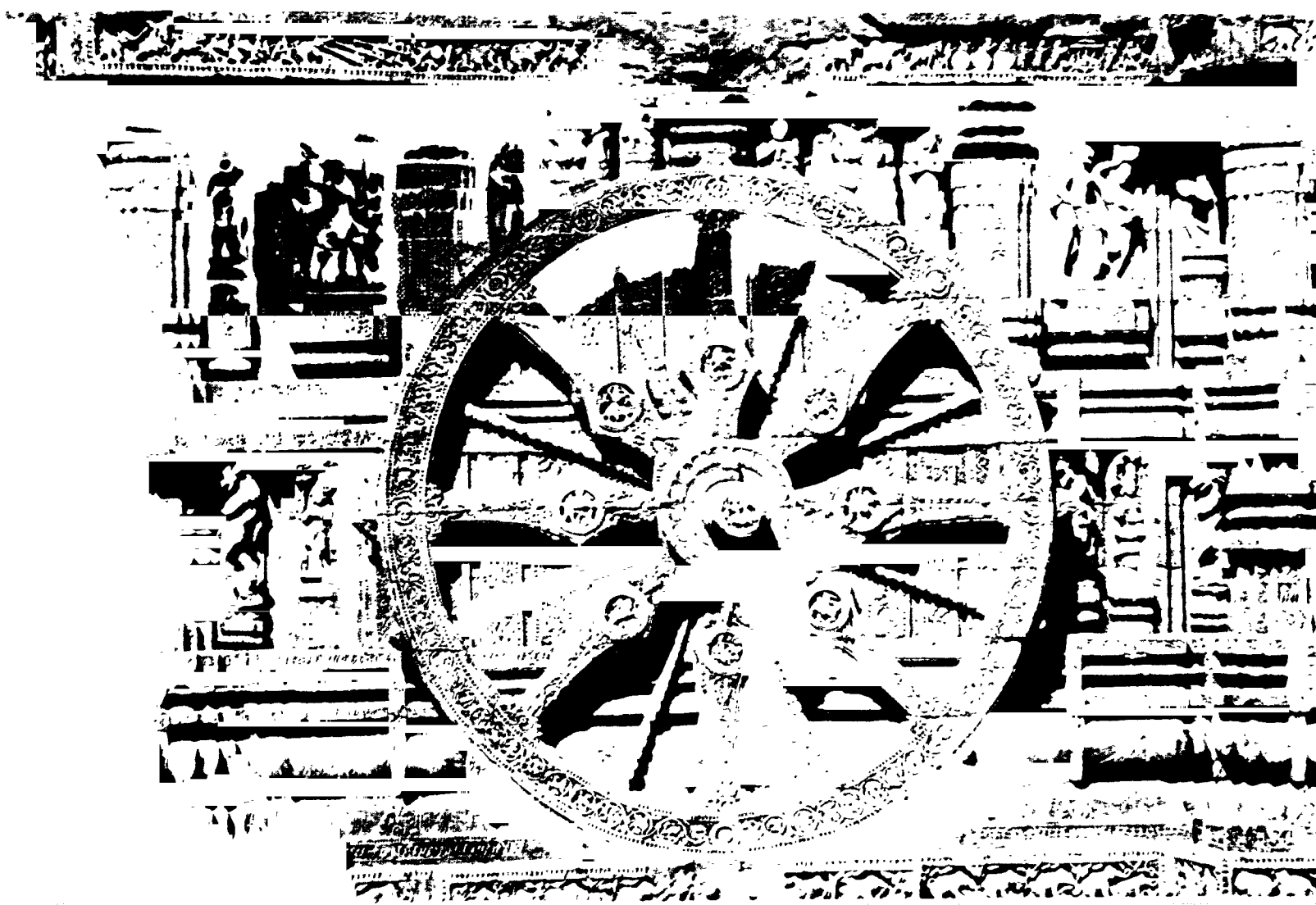


222

222. Annular stone as Yoni.

225. Scenes of erotic play  
juxtaposed with figures  
of divinities.

225







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